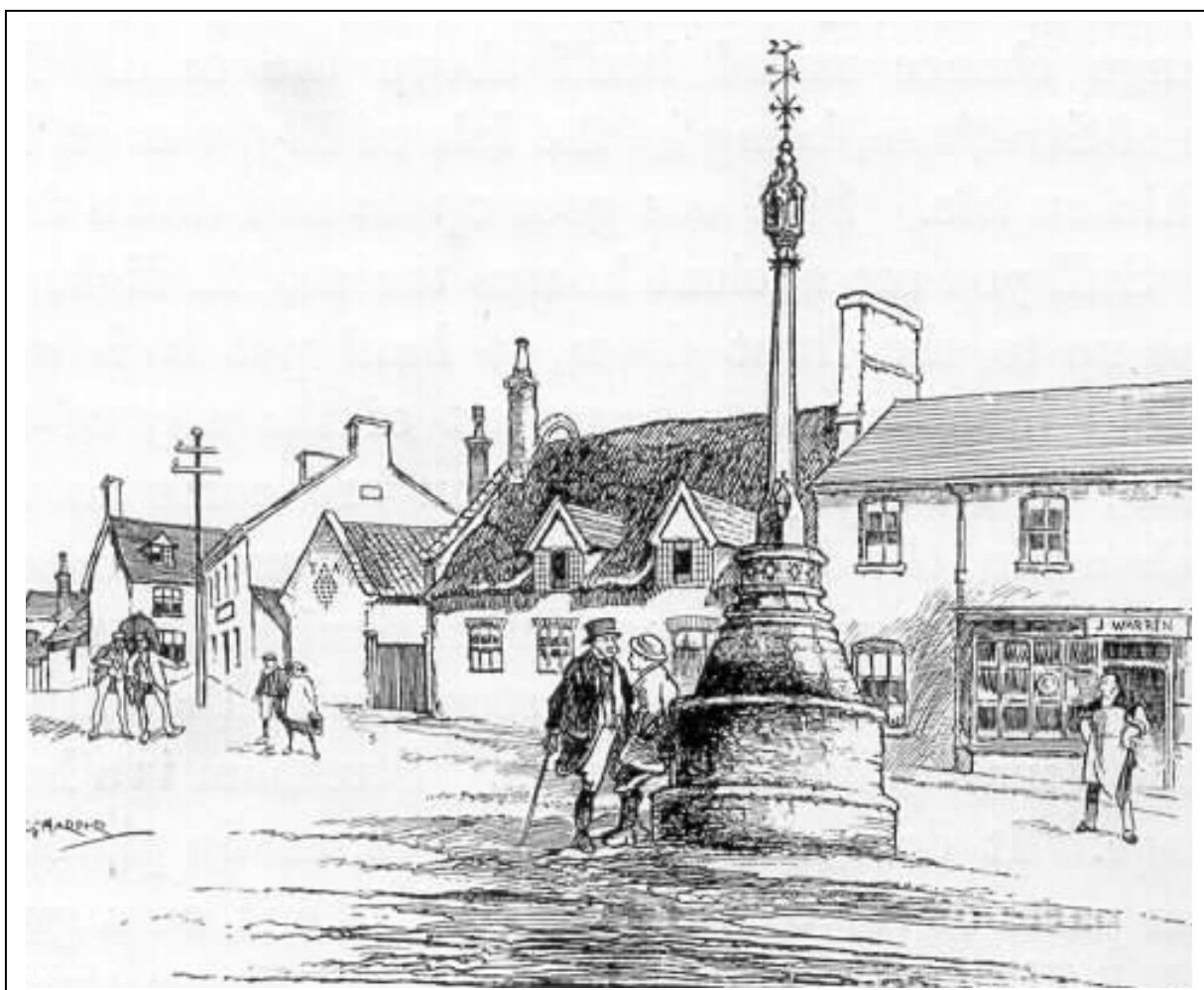


Stretham Millennium History

Turbulent Priests:
A History of Stretham 1222-2000

by
Mike Petty

Produced by Cambridge Heritage Associates, 2000
Digitised 2015



Stretham Millennium History compiled by Mike Petty

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17 July 2012., revised 24 Feb 2014.

Stretham Millennium History CD-Rom

This History was compiled from the written material generated by the Cambridge Heritage Associates team for the Stretham Millennium History project. These folders of notes and illustrations have been deposited with Stretham Parish Council.

It was issued on a CD compiled by Mike Petty to who any amendments or corrections should be notified

It had sections on

Geology, by Sarah Wroot

Archaeology & early history by Alison Taylor

Domesday by Tom Doig

The architectural setting, materials for building and the buildings of each century, by Beth Davis

Street History, by Mike Petty

Stretham Chronology, by Mike Petty

Turbulent Priests, by Mike Petty

There are 50 illustrations from prints, postcards & photographs and a number of maps. For copies of these please contact Mike Petty

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Turbulent Priests: a Stretham Millennium History, by Mike Petty

Introduction

History is about places and people. This history is about the village of Stretham and the people who have lived here. Histories have to be arranged in some order and instead of listing events by Kings and Queens I have chosen to list them under Rectors.

Often we only know their names, sometimes not even that. Many of them may never have spent much time in the village at all, being too busy with their other Academic and other commitments and the actual parochial work would have been undertaken by an unknown curate.

But they were important people in the parish, for good or ill, and several of them had to fight for what they considered their rights. A number had battles against the other Very Important Person, the Lord of the Manor, who himself may seldom have ever visited this small part of their large estates.

Often the parishioners, the ordinary village folk, found themselves in conflict with both, with names such as Gotobed and Langford being prominent in local life in the 1600s. But others feature for other reasons, the Wesleys, Acreds, Dimocks, Reads and Graingers amongst them.

I have endeavoured to bring the story up to date, reflecting on the more recent shops & tradesmen that older residents will remember.

Inevitably there will be many gaps, and quite probably misinterpretations, which I should be happy to correct.

Numerous people have assisted in the compilation of this history, which has been ongoing for over 50 years! They include my colleagues in the Cambridge Heritage Associates, Sarah, Alison, Tom & Beth; Chris Holley who has spent many hours transcribing and digitising, John Kisby who lent me copies of his researches, and of course my wife Patricia without whom these notes would still be just a pile of paper.

I hope they all consider it worth while, and that you enjoy reading it. If you would like your own copy either on paper or on CD-Rom, then please contact me.

M.J. Petty MBE,
Stretham.

September 2000, revised Feb 2015.

Turbulent Priests: a Stretham Millennium History, by Mike Petty

Stretham at the start of our survey stood high on the Island of Ely dry above the surrounding fenland, yet near enough so that its people could benefit from the fen crops as well as cultivate the drier ground. There was no main road to Cambridge, the principle route for travellers being via Wilburton and Haddenham to Aldreth where a causeway ran across to the high land at Rampton.

The Island of Ely became one of the last places to be conquered following the Norman invasion and the Battle of Hastings, being defended by Hereward 'the Wake'. Eventually however he was defeated.

There is no mention of a village church in the Domesday Book survey of Stretham, 1085. It reads:

Stretham answers for hides, land for 9 ploughs. In lordship 3 hides: 4 ploughs here. 12 villagers, 10 acres each: 11 villagers with 1 hide; they have 5 ploughs. 10 cottagers; 2 slaves.

Meadow for 9 ploughs; pasture for the village livestock; from fisheries 3,250 eels; from presentations 7s 6d.

Total value £9: when acquired £6; before 1066 £12.

This manor lies and always lay in the lordship of the Church of Ely.'

But after the Norman invasion, a building was erected on the former Rectory Lawn. It could have been a tower house possibly connected with Hereward or Geoffrey de Mandeville, 1139-54, but was almost certainly lived in by an incumbent sent from Ely. [SB56]

When the Abbey of Ely was converted into a Bishopric in 1109 the new Bishop, Hervey, decided to separate the lands and possessions of the monks from those of the Bishop. Stretham went to the monks to be divided into three parts, two to be applied to the hostel for the entertainment of strangers, and the third part to finding the monks with necessities. [Bentham p134]

Arnulf 1222-1276

The first rector for whom a name survives dates from about 1222. In 1217 the church was valued at £16; by 1254 it has increased to £20. The Rev. S.S. Stitt dated the church arches to the Early English period, from about 1270.

At this time there were four comparatively small fields named from the points of the compass. References to two fields known as "Alvernercroft" and "Brocfeld" had disappeared by 1251. Is possible they were merged in "Suthfeld" where the demesne increased from 60 to 158 acres. This field was on the fen side and the increase may have been partly due to reclamation. The Lord of the Manor's share of the meadow increased from 18 to 80 acres between 1221 and 1251. The estate was stocked with 20 cows and a bull, 20 sows and a boar, and 300 sheep. In addition more than 100 cattle belonged to tenants. In 1251 marsh and fisheries produced £8 12s. yearly and £1.14.4 was due in rents. The village does not seem to have prospered. [VCH, SN160]

Thomas Wymbych 1276-129-

Thomas de Wymbych, was the rector in 1276, when he renounced all claimed to tithes from lands in the field of Ely held by men of Thetford [SB33].

Nicholas de Kyngeston, 129- 1302

There is a memorial in the chancel of the church to Nicholas Kyngestone. Writing in 1748 William Cole records: "Just at the bottom of the steps of the altar in the North wall is an arch and under it a raised tomb, covered with very old grey marble, with a bust and figure, which if ever there was any brass it is gone. Round it is an inscription in French – 'Nicol de Kyngstone, lies here, God on his soul have mercy, Amen' This person was founder or builder of the chancel and rector of the parish". In the Patent Rolls of Edward I there is a statement that Nicholas de Kyngestone, Rector of Wikenden, resigned his living June 11, 1283. This is probably the same man and very likely he came to Stretham. There was also a Nicholas de Kyngestone, a

knight whose name appears several times during the reign of Edward II, but he apparently belonged to Gloucestershire, and not to these parts; and this stone is clearly of an ecclesiastic and not a layman. [SB41]

Beth Davis notes that the nave of the church was rebuilt in the early 14th century, and two aisles included to the north and south, each with an arcade of four bays.

Richardus de Dogelly 1302-1338

In 1302 the Manor seemed to have reached its peak as source of profit and was midway in population scale; in 1302 899 works were commuted [VCH p.153]. In 1320 the Bishop of Ely was judged to be the Lord of the Manor and was to raise 22 stones of wool for the wool-tax, of which John Attehill, chaplain, was to pay him two stones [SN169].

By now it is likely that the tower house had been replaced with more conventional parsonage [SB56]. By about 1320 the rectory was thought to be a home of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster for old stained glass was found which seemed to have been the top part of a window. [Stitt p12]

William de Hatherston 1338

Nicholas de Bagthorpe (sub Deacon)

Church alterations had been begun in the late 13th century and were completed by about 1350. The nave was separated from the chancel by a late 14th century wooden screen. Three Guild chapels were constructed with their own altars in the aisle of the nave. Guilds were partly responsible for the maintenance of the fabric of the building and the burial of guild members, until their dissolution about 1540.

At the west end of the church a tower and spire was completed by the mid 14th century. It was an ambitious scheme and the quality of the masonry is outstanding up to the upper stages of the tower where work seems to have been interrupted by lack of funds, a change of priest or possibly the Black Death of 1347. When it continued poorer materials were used less skilfully with a simple parapet finishing off the tower. There was no spire at this stage. [BD]

In 1343 John Dymock of Stretham was admitted to holy orders for one of the churches of Thetford [SB33p10].

Robert Seyr 1351

The Black Death which raged through England for 20 years from 1348 killed 350 of the Diocese's 650 clergy as well as numerous peasants. It left far fewer labourers to work the fields and famine followed. The population plummeted and social change became inevitable. In 1356 the total receipts of the manor fell. The fisheries at "Estewater", Hayfen & "Berlake" produced revenue but 20 acres of fennemedwe were flooded and worthless as was the ruined manor house of Strethambury. The Bishop's moveable property was valued at £19 18s. [VCH p.153]. In 1358 there was a dispute between the royal and papal nominees as to who should have the living. It was settled in 1378 in favour of Robert de Stratton, the papal candidate [VCH p155].

Robert de Stratton 1366

Robert de Stratton was the first Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, 1350-1355. He was chaplain to the Black Prince, & Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, 1360-1385. But he was so illiterate that a complaint was made to the Pope that he was unfit for office. He died in March 1385 [Venn]. The outbreak of the Peasants' Revolt in 1381 was partly a revolt against increases in taxation. At Littleport a tax collector was captured and court rolls burned. More disorder followed.

William de Osgodby 1383

John Lindsay 1383

Work may have recommenced on the church with the construction of a tower about this time.

William Burgess 1407
John Braunston 1415
William Spalding

Richard Redman 1458-1488

Richard Redman was educated at Cambridge University, being awarded his MA in 1472 and made a Doctor of Divinity in 1479. He was chaplain to Bishop Gray who collated him to the rectory in March 1458. In 1488, being old and infirm, and having been at Stretham for 30 years he resigned the living and was granted a pension by Bishop Alcock: "Because he had laudably taken care of his parish during his incumbency, and that the Clerical order should not be disgraced through poverty" [Bentham p.184]

In 1478 John Morton was appointed both Bishop of Ely & Lord High Chancellor of England by King Edward IV. He became involved in many important affairs of State under successive monarchs, becoming Archbishop of Canterbury and was buried there in 1500, bequeathing to Ely cathedral his silver cross and Episcopal mitre richly set with pearls and precious stones. Whilst at Ely he was involved in fen drainage and was responsible for Morton's Leam. [Bentham p.179].

The legend is that on the way to take up his appointment he was so overcome with his first glimpse of the Cathedral that he walked barefoot from Stretham. The cross, according to Rev. Stitt, was removed from the churchyard where it had formerly stood and placed in present position to mark site of Bishop's self-humiliation. [Stitt p11]. If there is any truth in this tale it would have been known to John and Richard Ryplingham who were both appointed rectors in 1488

John & Richard Ryplingham 1488

John held the living for only a few months before he received another preferment. He was succeeded by his brother, Richard. Their mother, Dame Joan Swan, who William Cole describes as the wife of William Ryplingham, is commemorated on a memorial brass.

Richard Rysley 1523-1553

One of the village's most famous names, Richard Rysley, was appointed rector in 1523. He served during a turbulent period in national life.

A controversy arose in 1531 between the rector of Stretham and certain inhabitants of Lt Thetford over certain parochial rights due from them. To avoid lawsuits and foster friendship and goodwill an agreement was made allowing Thetford to have its own chaplain to minister to them and conduct all rites, except burials. The chaplain was granted the rents from Harrymere chapel and the tithes from Thetford Farm and various lands around. The people could hear divine service in their chapel on Sundays and other times, provided that they made their way to Stretham twice a year, on the feast of the dedication of Stretham church and on the feast of St James the Apostle, and make an offering of a halfpenny each. Otherwise it was up to the people of Thetford to support their chaplain and maintain Harrymere chapel. The footpath from Lt Thetford to Stretham is still known as the Burying Way

A greater change came in 1537 with the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII. Under the Reformation Guilds were unable to use the church where pews filled the nave. With the severing of the association with the guilds the regular saying of masses and the loss of ceremony and ritual would have been reflected to alterations to the church chancel. The great medieval wall paintings would have been white washed.

Many Guilds built Guildhalls or town houses. In Stretham this may have stood on or near the site of the present Red Lion or Home Farm. When about 1540 the guilds were dissolved the Guildhall was used by the parish as a workhouse or almshouse and split into three tenements. By 1553 it was owned by the Rev Rysley. He bequeathed his estate at Upton near Huntingdon, the rent to be split between Christ's college, Cambridge and the poor of Bridgham and Stretham. He also left the Chequers public house, a blacksmith's shop, then let at 10/-, & a property known as the Towne House, which was divided up into three tenements. This was later

sold in 1586 with the money added to that distributed - the money still dispensed by the Stretham Charity Trustees.

Queen Mary came to the throne in 1553 determined to restore the Catholic faith. It was a period of religious persecution and turmoil with clergy burnt at the stake for their views.. At Ely a new Bishop, Thomas Thirlby was appointed and was sent by the Queen to visit the Pope to pledge the country's obedience to his doctrine. In Stretham Rev Richard Rysley was succeed by John Young

1554-1559 John Young

Young was said to have been a monk at Ramsey. He had been elected Master of Pembroke college, Cambridge in 1553. In 1554 he appointed was Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University & made a prebendary of Ely cathedral as well as Rector of Stretham. The church registers begin in 1558, during his incumbency. Young was a very active man in Queen Mary's reign in promoting popery and was one of those sent to dispute with Cranmer, Ridley & Latimer.

When Queen Elizabeth came to the throne he was deprived of all his preferments, including Stretham and was confined in the Kings Bench prison where he died in 1579

1559-1570 Lancelot Ridley

Ridley was Educated at Clare Hall, Cambridge. In 1541 he had been appointed one of its six preachers at Canterbury cathedral. Under Edward VI he was vigorous defender of Protestantism, publishing various commentaries & was promoted to chancellorship of St Pauls in 1551. In 1545 he was appointed to the living of Willingham

But on Queen Mary's accession he was proceeded against as a married clergyman & was deprived of his living, 1553-54. He subsequently put away his wife and returned to celibacy and Roman Catholicism. After Queen Elizabeth came to the throne he came back into favour and was reappointed as one of six preachers of Canterbury in 1560.

In 1559 Ridley was made rector of Stretham & is believed to have added a wing to the east end of the rectory. Such enlargement was common due to an increase in rectorial income and the abolition of clerical celibacy. He seems to have become reunited with his wife, Mary & was buried in the village on 16th June 1570.

They had three sons, Lancelot (buried at Stretham in 1560), Henry, & the most famous of the family, Mark who was born in Stretham 1560. Mark graduated from Clare Hall, Cambridge, became a doctor & went to Russia as physician to English merchants there. On the recommendation of Lord Burghley he was appointed chief physician to the Czar of Russia. On the death of the czar in 1598 Mark returned to England & practised in London. He was appointed to an office in College of Physicians & wrote a treatise on magnetism in 1613 which includes his portrait, the earliest picture we have of a Stretham resident.

In 1586 Mark Ridley conveyed to the charity the towne houses, or Guildhall & then three tenements which had been earlier bought by the late Rector, his father. The rent was to be distributed to such poor people as shall be thought to have need. It thus joined the monies disbursed under the will of Richard Rysley.

John Parker 1570-1592

John Parker 1534-1592, was educated at Peterhouse, Cambridge & Christ Church, Oxford. In 1557 he had been collated to the rectory of Shipdam, Norfolk & in 1560 his friend, Richard Cox, Bishop of Ely, transferred him to Fen Ditton. He was appointed prebendary in 1565 & archdeacon of Ely in 1558.

On 24 September 1570 Parker was collated to Stretham which he held till his death. He resigned from Fen Ditton but gained the post of rector of Bluntisham in 1573. He married Winifred, daughter of William Turner, dean of Wells; and had three children born in Stretham between 1572 & 1576 [DNB].

When Bishop Cox died in 1581 John Parker was offered the post of Bishop of Ely, but he declined & the see remained vacant for 17 years.

Queen Elizabeth was granted the right to take any lands belonging to the church chose the Manor of Stretham. A survey was made in 1571 of all lands which belonged to the parsonage of Stretham giving field names and another in 1581 which showed the Berrystead or manor house was valued at 40 times its annual rent - £486.13.4. – but its tenancy was in dispute (Appendix 1).

In 1591 a new church bell was installed which was used until it was replaced in 1876.

John Parker died on 26 May 1592 and was buried four days later in the chancel of Stretham, within the altar rails. [Bentham p.241]

Edward Jones 1592-1597

Edward Jones was Rector from 1592 until 1597. Throughout his ministry the Bishopric was vacant, while plans for the Stretham lands to pass to the Crown continued to progress

Between 1581-1600 the lessee of the manor of Stretham was Richard Drake who sub-let it to Henry Vernon. But it was granted by Queen Elizabeth to Samuel Sandys & Sir Miles Sandys of Wilburton. He was soon in dispute with his tenants over common rights and with the new Rector, William Lawrence

William Lawrence 1597-1621

Lawrence was educated at Peterhouse and Queens' colleges, Cambridge and had been Rector of Newton before being appointed to Stretham. He stayed till his death in October 1621.

From the start of his ministry the Rector and the rest of the village found themselves in dispute with the Lord of the Manor, Sir Miles Sandys, and his son, Sir Miles junior both very powerful men [Appendix 2].

In 1605 the Lord of the Manor of Thetford, and the Rector of Stretham, combined to appeal to the Court of Exchequer about some of Sandys activities in the parish. They gave a judgement in 1607 by which Sandys was empowered to inclose his demesne but 1,600 acres were to be set aside as common pasture for tenants of the manor and Sandys was excluded from any interference, or keeping cattle on the commons. It also relieved copyholders from various illegal or exorbitant demands. Other lands formerly ploughed that belonged to Sir Miles were converted to pasture.

But it was not the end of the difficulties for the villagers went back to the court claiming they still did not have sufficient land to pasture their stock. A new set of orders was made in June 1609 allowing every tenant of a commonable house to pasture five horses, with an extra horse for every 15 acres, up to 60 acres, that he cultivated. The Rector was allowed an additional 3 horses. The lord was allowed 5 horses in all. Sandys was also given permission to erect a cottage at a new ferry allowing tenants the same cross for the same price as at the old one. This ferry was near the present bridge in Green End. (Appendix 3).

It was something of a victory, perhaps celebrated by the ringing of a new church bell, installed in 1615,

This was a period of debate and discussion about the large-scale drainage of the fens. In 1600 an Act of Parliament was passed which established a principal that owners of flooded land should give some of it to people who were prepared to drain it and keep it dry permanently.

At his accession in 1603 King James I showed a lively interest in drainage. He asked the commissioners of sewers, who were responsible for drainage without the individual parishes, to make a list of people who were prepared to participate in such a venture.

Sir Miles Sandys persuaded the King that he had a plan for such a scheme in the Isle of Ely which, he claimed, would be for the public good. However a pamphlet entitled the "Anti-projector" revealed that it was

all a fraud and it was condemned by parliament as a “base cheating monopoly”. Sir Miles however continued to promote drainage schemes.

1621-1643 Nicholas Felton

Nicholas had the misfortune to minister during a turbulent period. Fen drainage was an ongoing concern though meetings in 1616 and 1619 had rejected the idea of large-scale drainage schemes. On his accession in 1625 King Charles I decided to leave fen drainage to his subjects.

Like his predecessors Felton soon found himself in dispute with Sir Miles. When he was appointed in 1621 he claimed that several areas of open ground which had been held by previous rectors were flooded and so had not been perambulated. Sir Miles & his son had inclosed and occupied the grounds for 8 years, ploughed and sown part with corn and grain and stocked the rest with sheep and cattle. But he had not paid tithes to the rector who complained: “They pretended the land were not part of manor of Stretham or lye in parish whereas they very well know that they do”.

In 1622 the rights of the commoners were once more being discussed & bylaws defined the rights in greater detail. Each commoner was entitled to pasture 6 cows & 2 weaning calves with an extra cow if they had a bull, in the “heardwalke”. They could also pasture 8 working horses or mares with foals in Starlock Hay Fen, which had become horse pasture. Although they could hire cattle to make up the permitted total, the pasturing of cattle from outside the village for money payment was not allowed. The ditch called Barlake, between the cow and horse pastures was to be communally scoured each year. Cattle horse had to stay on their own pastures & pigs were banned from either. Chair, Hole & Lazier fens, the commons set aside for cattle pasture were not to be used for turf cutting. Fines imposed including 40s for trapping fish in “netts or engines” in the breaches and gulls of the fen banks.

Nicholas Felton’s wife died just before Christmas 1624. He seems to have remarried in April 1625 to Susan Clenche at Lt Downham. The registers record the deaths in 1649 of Mrs Susan Felton, widow, and two of her children, Edward & Susan the younger.

In 1634 Sir Miles Sandys was granted a market in Stretham on Thursday and two annual fairs on the feasts of St Mark & St Michael and the two days following; with court of pie powder, together with reasonable tolls for stalls or saleable things. While this might bring increased commerce it may not have been universally welcome for in 1636 there was plague in the Lincolnshire fens and all fairs within that district were suspended.

Meanwhile large scale plans for fen drainage were once again in progress & Sir Miles enlisted as one of the Adventurers, putting up the funding to assist the Earl of Bedford in his scheme, promising to make the fens dry throughout the Summer months. One aspect of the scheme put forward by Cornelius Vermuyden was the cutting of a new straight river from Earith to Salter’s Lode, near Denver. Most of the water which had previously flowed down the Old West River would now be channelled along the new river. The approval for such works had been granted in 1630 but met with opposition from local people. However by 1637 the new river had been cut & the scheme was pronounced a success. However its banks proved too weak to contain the amount of water and broke down, flooding the fenland. The old Adventurers, including Sir Miles, had almost bankrupted themselves in the attempt

In 1638 King Charles I declared that he would take over the work and do a better job – making the fens dry in winter as well as summer months. Meanwhile Oliver Cromwell, collector of Ely Cathedral tithes, started to petition for better compensation for fenmen whose lands were affected by the drainage proposals.

In 1641 Rev Felton once more complained about Sir Miles’ Stretham activities, claiming that he could not even pay the debts he owed to the king and was utterly remediless. He asked that Miles be made to produce surveys showing ancient boundaries that he had previously refused to make available to him.

But the King had other matters on his mind. He had converted to Catholicism, appointed a new Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud in 1633 and a new Bishop of Ely, Wren, was seeking to beautify churches with

candles. These were seen as “rags of popery” to puritans such as Cromwell, adding another dimension to the disputes of the time. Felton followed the new dictates, railing in the communion table, making new steps to the altar and bowing twice as he went up and came back.

However others were less willing to concede to the changes. When Charles tried to export his religious views into Scotland he met great opposition. The Scots invaded and the King was forced to recall parliament in 1640 to raise the necessary taxes for an army to oppose them. But parliament opposed him and in 1642 the King declared war on parliament. With the outbreak of the Civil War England divided into factions, brother against brother. Cambridge University supported the King, Cambridge town and county backed parliament.

It was thus an inopportune time for Cornelius Vermuyden to publish his latest thoughts on the drainage of the fens, confirming what fenmen knew – that the lands were flooded, when they should have been dry. He came up with a new scheme, but at a time like this who would be prepared to incur the wrath of the locals by even more disruptions.

As it was the fenland around the Isle of Ely was a crucial area. Still largely undrained it was an area easy to hold and difficult to capture. It provided a means of cross-country travel to those who knew their way through the marshes, such as Cromwell and the King’s supporters, for Charles had a Palace at Newmarket.

The area was in turmoil, but nobody could be sure whether people were agitated about drainage, religion, the King or Parliament. There were other factors too. The Bishop of Ely was a power in the land with his own gaol at Ely which was much disliked & was broken open. And Sir Miles was proving obnoxious, arresting a number of prospective parliamentary fighting men in Sutton who objected to him enclosing land.

As the Civil War raged throughout the area. Cromwell secured the approaches onto the Isle of Ely with a fort at Elford Close amongst others. In 1645 the Royalists made an attempt on Ely but by then their cause was lost.

One casualty of the war was Parson Felton. He was accused of having supported the Royalist cause, “reading the King's declaration, and refusing to read the ordinance of Parliament, and left off praying for the same”. He was also accused of persuading a parishioner not to join Cromwell's Regiment & soldiers found arms and a barrel of gunpowder in his house. In addition it was said he got drunk, gambled & paid too much attention to his curate’s wife.

He had certainly continued his opposition to the power of Sir Miles Sandys for at a Visitation of 1638 it was reported that “A chapell erected by Sir Miles Sandys not yet consecrated”. This may have been erected following the death of Sir Miles’ wife in 1636 or his brother in 1638. It was described by Cole as an “exceeding handsome and elegant chapel of free stone, ... very large, finely roofed and well carved”. On March 23rd 1645 the church witnessed the funeral of Sir Miles Sandys. His estate passed to his son, Sir Miles Sandys junior.

But by then Nicholas Felton had been ejected from his living by a warrant of the Earl of Manchester, & a new rector, Matthew Clarke, who was approved by the Assembly of Divines, was instituted in his place

1644-1650 Matthew Clarke

If he was freed from one problem parishioner Clarke still had another. In 1647 Dorothy Ellis was accused of witchcraft: “the Devil appeared to her in the form of a great cat & she gave it her blood; she bewitched the cattle of Thomas Hitch - which died - and took the life of the daughter of Thomas Salter, Mary, who died 27 September 1646, and made his mother lame”. The registers do record the death of Mary Salter. Matthew Hopkins, witchfinder general also accused Robert Ellis with witchcraft, but he refused to confess. Matthew Clarke was buried in Stretham on 3rd December 1650

1651-1662 Robert Carr

Robert Carr was a Yorkshireman who attended Gonville & Caius college, Cambridge. He was probably vicar of Middleton Tyas in 1628, & Bywell, Northumberland in 1637 before being appointed by the Parliamentary

Committee to Stretham in 1651. There was by now a thriving nonconformist congregation in Stretham: "there was a good Baptist church which in 1656 was under the pastoral care of John Tabram. It appears to have been numerous and flourishing as on October 26th Messrs J. Denne & E. Mayle paid them a visit and assisted in the ordination of two teachers Thomas Bedford & Robert Gardiner, and one deacon Thos Gotobed. Bedford soon removed to Hawson and fell into divers immoralities, which obliged the brethren to withdraw their communion with him, and though he afterwards earnestly applied for re-admission into their society, yet his conduct not being consistent with his profession, he was refused"

The problem of fen drainage continued. In 1649 William, 5th Earl of Bedford, and his old team of adventurers had started on a new scheme, once more engineered by Vermuyden. This time works included a New Bedford River, alongside the Old, with a washland in between. There were new barrier banks, sluices at Denver and Earith – and renewed opposition, not least from workers still waiting to be paid for their last efforts. In 1653 the South Level was judged to be properly drained at last. Sir Miles Sandys junior saw his labour's vindicated but he died without issue in 1654 and the title lapsed.

However if there were hopes that peace between clergy and Lord of the Manor might be established, these were soon to be dashed. On the death of Sandys the manor passed to Sir Charles Sedley, the Restoration dramatist and wit, & his wife Catharine Savage. But by 1659 Sir William Walker & John Hampton were joint Lords of the Manor and claimed to hold all fens free from tithes payable to the Rector, Robert Carr. Sir Walter Walker was another formidable adversary. He was a Judge of the Courts of Admiralty & of Probate. It was a dispute that continued throughout his pastorate

When Carr left Stretham he may have gone to be Chaplain to the Earl of Warwick & Vicar of Braintree between 1662 & 1676 [DNB, Venn Biographical registers of Gonville & Caius]

1662-1678 Henry Brunsell

Rev Henry Brunsell was educated at Oxford University where he first studied medicine but on the restoration of King Charles II switched to divinity. He was made a prebend of Ely cathedral in 1660 & was inducted to Stretham in 1662.

Conditions in the fens were described in 1663 by Samuel Pepys who journeyed "along dikes where sometimes we were ready to have our horses sink to the belly ... over most sad fens, observing sad lives which people do live, sometimes rowing from one spot to another and then wading". In 1670 John Evelyn described land so rich that "weeds grow on the banks, almost as high as a man and horse" – but was beset by "swarms of gnats".

Brunsell soon encountered the problems faced by his predecessor. In 1664 he issued a claim against various parishioners, including Gotobed & Langford over non payment of the proper tithes for land at Stretham mere. He claimed Sir Walter Walker drew up their answer & encouraged them hoping to share the tithes amongst themselves.

In 1666 Brunsell submitted his case for arbitration to Sir Charles Harbord but it turned out very badly for him - in fact he believed the judgement had been drafted by Walker, who continued to put him under pressure. Nevertheless the Rector performed his part of the deal, but neither Walker nor any of others observed it or paid him what they should have done.

Next year Brunsell's wife, Anne died. She was the sister of Sir Christopher Wren the architect and he is said to have been responsible for building her a house in Chapel Street. Brunsell is thought to have remodelled the rectory, building a new two storey range on the south side. Perhaps they lived in the Chapel Street house whilst the rebuilding was going on.

The church contains a memorial to Anne Brunsell, who was buried 28th February 1668.. They had at least three children who died young: Henry buried 25 Nov 1665, Christopher baptised 24th June 1666, buried 3rd November 1667, Anne christened 7th October 1667 buried 11 Aug 1668.

Henry Brunsell remarried on 7th December 1669 to Mary Berry of Hampton Jay, Oxford, who outlived him & was buried 12 Dec 1693

By 1669 the parish was home to nonconformists who met by stealth and in the night and in 1672 the house of William Outlar was licensed for Congregational worship, though this soon died out.

Sir Walter Walker died in 1674 but by then Brunsell was in far worse condition than before. He feared that the church and his successor rectors were totally disinherited and defrauded of their just rights & that the commoners and inhabitants were prejudiced against him. The tithe was now worth less than at the time of Queen Elizabeth. He petitioned Mr Pierrepont & Sir Thomas Chicheley claiming that Walker and Hanson had 'contrived a greedy design to get to themselves more than did of right belong to them' hoping they would declare the award void. (Appendix 4)

Henry Brunsell died in 1679 & was buried in the chancel, 26 February. He founded three exhibitions at Magdalene college, Oxford and three more at Jesus college, Cambridge.

1679-1690 Richard Oldham

Oldham was educated at St John's college, Cambridge and was a Fellow there from 1670 to 1695. At his death he was buried in the college chapel.

He was appointed to be Rector of Newton in the Isle of Ely in 1677 and to Stretham in 1679. Little is currently known of his period here but in November 1680 he buried Elizabeth, wife of John Gotobed and her twin sons, followed in March 1681 by the twin daughters of Luke and Mary Bostone. The church plate includes a chalice and paten of 1686

1690-1696 Robert Kemp

Kemp was admitted to Corpus Christi college, Cambridge, in 1680 & was a Fellow between 1685 & 1689. He would probably have been a young man when appointed to Stretham. He started a family with his wife Penelope. His son Duncomb was born in 1693 & went on to become an apothecary in London before being buried in Stretham in 1726. They had two daughters before his wife died in February 1695 and Robert himself was buried in May 1696.

There was one particular death within his ministry, that of the Lady Mary Walker in November 1691. She was the widow of Sir Walter Walker who had caused such problems to the Rev Henry Brunsell. Lady Mary is commemorated in a memorial on the wall of the church & her will and the inventory of her possessions survives at the Cambridge Record Office [CRO VC35.1 1691 CW]. She owned half of the Manor of Stretham which comprised seven messuages, 11 acres of arable, 130 acres of pasture and 432 acres of fen ground. These she bequeathed to her grandson, Walter Walker. He died in 1705 and is also commemorated in the church.

Amongst her other bequests was £10 to be paid to the churchwardens for distribution amongst the poor of the village and an annual payment of £30 "to be employed for ever towards the maintenance of a Grammar School at Stretham".

Her inventory gives some indication of what the house was like. There were four main bedrooms plus one in the garret, each containing a feather bed. The parlour contained two tables and six chairs, and was separated by a passage from the hall which had another three tables and five chairs. The kitchen was equipped with racks, dresser, warming pan, seven chairs, two tubs, two wash boilers, frying pan and bellows. She possessed one old coach with two old grey mares and some younger horses. [SN165 - Appendix 5]

1696-1727 Dr Ralph Perkins

Ralph Perkins was born in London about 1658 and educated at Queens' college Cambridge where he was Fellow in 1681-1698. He became Chaplain to Bishop Patrick who appointed him to the rectory of Stretham in June 1696 though he continued to make the college his chief place of residence. He resigned the living in

1727, when a new church bell was installed, and retired to London. He gave a paten to Stretham in 1712 & was great benefactor to Ely cathedral library and various ecclesiastical charities.

In 1696 a serious fire broke out in Stretham causing damage assessed at £2,170. This may have raged around the centre of the village, including the area now occupied by Orchard House for in 1718 William Read bought "a yard where one messuage formerly stood & was burnt down" in which Orchard House was build about 1780.

Out in the fens Denver Sluice collapsed in 1713 due to a very heavy flood meeting a high tide and sea water rushed up the Ouse, causing flooding. It also increased the water in the Old West river, which had previously dried to a trickle, cutting off navigation & forcing all the barge traffic between Cambridge and Huntingdon to go down the Ouse to Denver and up the New Bedford River. At Haddenham in 1726 landowners got together to obtain a private Act of Parliament to drain their area.

A congregation of Baptists under Mr Clark met but ceased to be organised body after his death c1725. Another death was that of Walter Walker junior, son of Walter, gentleman, who died without issue & was buried 5th April 1705. His memorial is in the church.

At this period various property was left for the benefit of the poor. In 1715 Thomas King gave 11 acres to churchwardens for the use of poor. In 1727 Lady Effingham Howard left the sum of £50, the interest of which was to be given to the poor & Martha Digby devised ten acres of arable lands, meadows & fennish grounds to her husband and then 'to the use of my much esteemed friends' the Rev Ralph Perkins, Edward Morden and William Read, that they might "well and truly distribute and pay yearly for ever six days before Easter Sunday and six days before Christmas Day all the rents and profits unto such and so many of the poorest housekeepers, inhabitants of Stretham which do not receive any allowances ..." [see Appendix 6 on Charities].

1727-1771 Charles Thomas

The charitable bequests are still commemorated on a table of benefactors put up in the church by Rev Charles Thomas in 1735

Thomas had attended Corpus Christi college; he became a MA in 1718 and a priest in 1722. His first appointment was as vicar of Barton Turf, Norfolk, 1722-27 before he came to Stretham where he was to stay the rest of his life, finally laid to rest on the south side of the Aisle. He was quite a character, described by William Cole as "a man of parts, but of an odd and whimsical disposition"

Cole was an antiquarian who visited Stretham in 1748 and left detailed notes (Appendix 7). The Rectory, he wrote, "is a very good and large House & stands just without the churchyard on the South side: there seems to have been a great deal of very old stone Building: a little part of which still remains at the North end of the house, with good arched cellars below. Mr Thomas showed me some old painted glass which came out of the windows before they were pulled down, in this house, in which they have a notion that John of Gaunt sometime lived"

He also recorded the state of the cross at that time, and includes a sketch which shows it with a flight of stone steps. Cole noted: "Just without side of the churchyard at the East end in the street stands a neat and elegant cross of stone on a freese of five steps, the shaft being terminated at the top with four small niches; & the whole quite perfect"

He also sketched and recorded the church: "This is a fine large church, with a square tower at the west end, of stone in which hangs four bells and a clock; on the tower is a fine spire of stone. The nave is large and spacious, a chancel and part of a south transept isle and south porch, all of which are leaded and in good repair and a north isle and chapel at the east end of it; and beyond that a fine large chapel built about 150 years ago, as it seems by the building which is of stone.

"The altar is on two steps and railed in. Just under it in the middle lies and old free-stone, much worn by the (feet of the) officiating priest at the altar. At the west end there is a gallery recently built for the singers. The nave is separated from the chancel by a screen; the old pulpit stands against first of the four pillars on the north side, the old stone font against the last in the same side. The roof of the nave, which is very broad and spacious is supported in the middle by four wooden pillars for security. The said roof is exceedingly handsome and carved, and about it are four coats of arms supported by angels. The nave is separated from the chancel by a screen; the old pulpit stands against the first of the four pillars on the north side, the old stone font against the last in the same side."

He also goes on to describe the Sandys chapel: "At the East end of the North isle, is built an exceeding handsome and elegant chapel of freestone & very large, finely roofed & leaded and well carved. The entrance into it is by three handsome arches with two beautiful stone pillars and closed with a large screen of wood, over which is inscribed 'We that live and are remaining at the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep'. By which words, I suppose, it was erected by some of the Sandy's family who lived here and at Wilburton, for a burial place for their family." The memory of the family was not revered however for he goes on: "It is now in great squalidness and used for any rubbish and to run lead in for leading the church. At the East end is fixed a good handsome monument of alabaster, but now much broken and defaced ...".

In 1754 when Matthias Mawson was appointed Bishop of Ely the city and country around were in decline, much of the fenland being under water and the public roads in so bad a state as not to be travelled with safety. All of these the Bishop started to remedy. Under his initiative the first road from Ely to Cambridge that was passable by wheeled carriages was undertaken, through Stretham. He procured much of the gravel from Barton Hill, Ely.

A turnpike act was obtained in 1763 and the road completed some 20 years later at cost of upwards of £7,000. A bridge was built across the Old West and the Stretham ferry discontinued. Shortly afterwards George Gould, Lord of the Manor, erected another bridge near the site of the old ford – the "Wooden Bridge" in Green End.

Following the Haddenham example an Act of parliament was obtained in 1741 to establish the Waterbeach Level internal drainage commissioners to sort out the drainage problems in the fen. Out at Denver the sluice was rebuilt in 1750 and was followed by flooding. In the winter of 1768-69 the fen reeves were out calling people to help stop the water that was running over the banks of the Old West. It was to no avail, the banks burst at Over. William Cole recorded: "I rode as far as Stretham bridge, the toll keeper said he heard very plain all night the waters roaring from Over"

In 1766 another Waterbeach Level drainage act was obtained as "a considerable part of common near a bridge that has lately been built is frequently overflowed". They held their first meeting at the Chequers Inn. The Clay Pits passed to the Commissioners & were to be sold to fund the work.

Meanwhile there were changes in property ownership. In 1758 "Mr Walker's estate" was purchased by the Earl of Hardwicke for £500. There was an amount of new building, including Oakley House & the large house at Plantation Gate.

William Cole records the death of the rector: "Rev Charles Thomas died a bachelor in the Rectorial house, where had had been conveyed on Sunday evening January 13 1771 & was buried in the chancel, desiring no other person's gravestone might be disturbed for him. He was a man of parts, but of an odd and whimsical disposition, as many parts of his will evidenced."

Cole himself was anxious for the post: "Mr Alderman Bentham dining with me at Milton the day Mr Thomas died, told me of his dying condition, & altho' his brother James Bentham made interest to get the living, yet advised me to try what I could do for it: which I should not have thought of but that my Lord Montfort sending his servant over to me next day with a haunch of venison, in my letter of thanks, I just mentioned it to him, but in the most slight manner. However his Lordship wrote that night or on Tuesday to the Duke of Grafton & Lord North, Secretary of State, representing my unfortunate situation in having my estate for the last 5 or 6 years almost totally under water. But I was too late: the Bp of Peterborough sending an appeal to the Duke who got it for the new Master of Pembroke Hall, Mr Browne"

1771-1784 James V. Brown

At the time of his appointment to Stretham Brown was Master of Pembroke College, a position he was to hold until his death. He had earlier been both a student and Fellow. He was Vice Chancellor of the Cambridge University from 1771-1772. He had been ordained a priest in 1737 and previously served as vicar of Shepreth.

William Cole records the somewhat unusual circumstances surrounding his appointment in February 1771. "The Rev James Brown MA, Master of Pembroke Hall, is presented by His Majesty to the rectory of Stretham in the King's gift for this turn. On 9th October 1771 Mr Brown was created Doctor of Divinity by Dr Gordon, who officiated as Professor of Divinity for Dr Rutherford, who was then actually dead, but who had requested this favour before he left Cambridge."

In May 1771 a serious fire broke out at a Malting House belonging to Mr Lowe. It destroyed his malting office, farmhouses, barns, & outhouses. Next year, 1772, a new Baptist meeting house was built,

This was a period of great change within the social fabric of the village with the arrival of a new Lord of the Manor. Sir Charles Gould (1726-1806), was then judge advocate general and a favourite of King George III. He was knighted in 1779, made a baronet in 1792 & a Privy Councillor in 1802. Charles Gould had married Jane, eldest daughter of Thomas Morgan Lord Lieutenant of Monmouth and Brecon & when she inherited the family lands in 1792 he changed his name to Gould Morgan. He spent a great deal of money buying land from the Walkers and from Lord Byron of Rochdale until in 1774 he'd united the Manor which had previously been split between a number of people and eventually he owned 1,213 of the 4,085 acres in the parish. He is said to have occasionally lived in Plantation House. The house at Plantation Gate dates from this time.

Meanwhile other large landowners were changing. In 1773 William Read, a considerable farmer, died "in the prime of life" & about 1780 Joseph Read "Gentleman" built Orchard House. He did not live to enjoy it for he died in 1786, leaving the property to his son, William Sayers Read, then only four years old. 1776 saw the death of Samuel Granger, "an eminent farmer" & in 1779 Edward Granger, "principal farmer" also died, aged 49. His memorial is in the church.

While we may know little about these eminent farmers another local character, has been more fully recorded. William Merry was a wildfowler at Stretham ferry; "his knowledge of the haunts was most precise, his navigation of his punt, judgement and assiduity were alike conspicuous. As a marksman he was extraordinarily expert; with a gun upwards of six feet in the barrel, and that placed on the stocks by the village carpenter, and altogether of a weight which nothing but a most powerful arm could extend and elevate, would kill a snipe flying ... Old Merry had not been much troubled with education, rude as the country in which his occupation lay... had innate civility ... fund of anecdotes". He killed an eagle of very large size in 1772, the previous winter he killed a crane, once very plentiful but not heard of for several years, the Cambridge Chronicle reported in November 1773. Merry died in 1780 (Appendix 8).

But the area he knew was changing. In 1777 C.N. Cole reported that the recent drainage act had had effect and already the commons had increased in value by a quarter. There were already a number of drainage mills installed. Stretham Common Fen Mill discharged the water off the common into the West River, the Mere Mill was less effective and stood where previously a drain came from Stretham Mere into the river. By now three drainage mills erected in the Waterbeach Level - Upper, Gate & Dowload or Dollar [SB58]

By then a new bridge had been built over the West River by Sir Charles Gould. "It is one among many instances of his public spirit & maintains a communication between Stretham Mow Fen & Stretham Feeding Commons & prevents the michiefs that often happened from driving the stock and conveying the produce of the land across the river."

In 1779 the memory of the hated Miles Sandys was erased when his chapel was demolished. A faculty was granted to the rector and churchwardens to pull down "a building formerly used as a School house and sometime as a burial place adjoining the north side of the chancel, which includes one arch of the aisle but

which is not used as a Burial place or Schoolhouse". This was done and the monuments perished. Permission was given for the end of the North aisle to be converted into a school or vestry room. Other work at this time included taking down the porch at the South door and repairing the church roof [Ely Rural Deanery Magazine December 1909 SN131]

In October 1784 the rector Rev D.V. Brown, was found dead in his bed; he had gone to bed in good health.

1784-1802 John Swaine

John Swaine was about 30 years old when he was appointed rector in 1784. He had a wife, Mary, and in June 1785 their daughter, Sophia was born. Sadly the following month, July 1785 he buried a son, John

In 1786 the village mourned the death of Joseph Read, who had built Orchard House a few years earlier. He left the property to his wife Frances and his 4-year-old son William Sayers Read.

By then there was a school in the village for older children under Robert Hopkins a churchman of fair and inoffensive character and another one for infants by John Sabbatin, a dissenter with a harmless reputation. The Baptist congregation continued to be active, adding new galleries to their chapel in 1799

In 1793 the house & effects of the late Eleanor Walker were sold, comprising a well built dwelling house, land and five goose father beds – were these perhaps some of the same beds mentioned in the will of an early Lady Walker in 1691?

Not all the inhabitants were so comfortable. In 1795 a letter was thrust under the door of Edward Dimock, miller, to say that if he raised his prices his mill would be burnt or pulled down. This caused particular distress for Edward had always kept his prices well below others in the area and a reward of 20 guineas was issued.

At this time, the Rector, John Swaine, was granted permission to hold the Rectory of Lt Shelford as well as that of Stretham. He died after a short illness in January 1802, aged 47. His memorial in the church shows his wife lived on for several years after him

Charles Vancouver produced a report on the agriculture of the area. in 1794. There were 122 houses, 150 families & 750 inhabitants, and the poor's rates amounted to two shillings in the pound.

East of Stretham were 100 acres of enclosed pastures, the soil was a deep black mould, lying upon gault & rented at 20/- an acre. To the West & adjoining the village were two open common fields, the soil of which generally resembled that of the pastures; they contained about 400 acres & were rented at 10/- an acre.

At that time the highland produced 24 bushels of wheat weighing 50lb per bushel, 28 bushels barley weighing 56lb a bushel, 20 bushel of peas and beans per acre with a rotation of three crops before a fallow

The open field land was kept very well drained by a wise regulation of appointing fen reeves who had the authority to order any drain to be opened at the expense of those to whom they belonged. Ash and elm trees flourished extremely well.

On the south was fen. This was of remarkably good quality but reduced to small value by the very defective state of the drainage.

Generally by now the wind pumps used for draining were falling down & the banks nearly washed away. In 1795 came extensive floods which reached across much of the present allotments. Two years later a new Waterbeach level drainage act was obtained & tollbars were erected on the river bank. There was extensive flooding between Denver & Ely with water six feet deep around Littleport. In 1799 the banks breached in various places and 25,000 acres south of the Hundred Foot River went under water. It was caused in part by floods on land that was frozen hard with ice 12-13 feet thick reported around Whittlesey. It all combined to produce the worst season for many years: in many parts men reaped in boats.

1803-1812 Caesar Morgan

By the time Caesar Morgan arrived in Stretham he had gained considerable experience in other parishes, having previously ministered at Ely St Mary, Elm, Coveney, Kelshall, Littleport & Wisbech St Peter. He had been educated at Christ's college Cambridge & won a gold medal prize for theology. He'd been chaplain to the Bishop of Ely and was made a Canon of Ely cathedral in 1804.

Arthur Young made a visit to the Waterbeach Level and published an account of the area in the "Annals of Agriculture" for 1805. He reported how he'd walked along the banks of the Cam from Clayhithe and found them in a very bad state. At present the floods in the winter damage these fens greatly, he reported, sometimes being a foot under water. Part of the problem was caused by new inclosures in the upland districts, meaning that water which had used to lie on their land until it evaporated was now carried off in new ditches, and thus discharged into the river much more speedily than previously.

In addition all the wind pumps were throwing up mud into the rivers, causing them to silt up. Because of this he doubted the profitability of enclosing Stretham lands.

Flooding continued in various places throughout the early 1800s and in 1809 150,000 acres went under water. An eyewitness reported that waters were six inches higher at Ely than he had ever seen until at last the banks gave way in most directions, involving cattle, stacks and everything in one general ruin. Damage was estimated at more than half a million pounds as all the next season's growing crops were lost.

In an effort to remedy the constant flooding a new large-scale scheme was commenced up near Kings Lynn. The Eau Brink Cut promised to bypass a wide bend in the river, but it was a costly enterprise, adding to the taxation burden on local farmers.

But there was another enemy too – Napoleon Bonaparte, threatened to invade England. Local villages needed to supply militia prepared to repel the French should invasion come and the United Volunteers of Ely, including Stretham and Haddenham men, trained to do their duty. In 1809 the Ely militia mutinied over the provision of knapsacks, and the army sent in German troops who rounded up and whipped a number of them in the streets. This caused great local resentment.

At this time too there was an application for a turnpike road from Stretham to Haddenham.

In 1808 the death of the Rector's wife deprived the village of a liberal benefactor too the poor, according to the Cambridge Chronicle reporter. The Rector died in January 1812 and was buried in Ely Cathedral. His furniture was sold.

1812-1818 Henry Law

Law was a product of Harrow school and St John's college, Cambridge. He'd been elected a Deacon of Ely in 1804 and was also vicar of Standon in Hertfordshire throughout his period at Stretham. When he left the village in 1818 he moved on to be Rector at Lt Downham, becoming a JP for the Isle of Ely and Hertfordshire, before dying in 1862.

During his incumbency more detail was included in the baptism registers, with the occupation of the parents being recorded. He also seems to have conducted baptisms in batches – thus on 10th March 1816 children of members of the Brown, Morris, Sadler and Rowel families were baptised at the same time

This was a period of particular hardship in the fens. The ending of the Napoleonic wars brought a collapse of farming, in 1814 a Lt Downham poet, William Harrison, lamented: "Corn sells so low, you all well know, It will not pay for growing". Two years later in 1816 the misery and despair of the period erupted in the Littleport riots when farmworkers seeking some relief from their hardship took the law into their own hands and were suppressed. Six were hanged on the gallows in June 1816.

Within Stretham the nonconformist congregations were developing. In 1814 a group including farmer Russell Blinch, blacksmith John Dring, butcher William Gotobed and victualler Francis Langford bought a plot of land 'upon which it is intended to build a chapel for public worship for the Society of Methodists'. (This was

the old Methodist schoolroom in Chapel Lane). The old Baptist chapel was also taken down and new one opened on the site in September 1818.

Other parts of the village were also undergoing change with a large sale of 13 lots of property in October 1813 by the Governors of the Poor of Ely.

1818-1827 John Henry Sparke

John Sparke was the eldest son of Bowyer Edward Sparke who was Bishop of Ely between 1812 and 1836. Like most Bishops Bowyer held a multitude of appointments and was able to ensure that his relations secured the most profitable posts in the diocese.

John Henry Sparke was educated at Eton and Pembroke college, Cambridge. On taking his BA in 1815 he was immediately appointed by his father to a bishop's fellowship at Jesus College and in 1816 made steward of all his father's manorial courts. In 1818 on taking his MA degree his father made him a prebend of Ely cathedral & appointed him to the sinecure rectory of Littlebury. Next month he was presented to the living of Stretham after the sitting tenant, Rev Henry Law, had been offered the living at Lt Downham. Next year John Sparke was granted a special dispensation by the archbishop of Canterbury allowing him to add the living of Cottenham to his other preferments.

In 1824 he was appointed Chancellor of the Diocese of Ely and exchanged the prebendal stall he held at Ely for another which had become vacant on the death of Rev Sir Henry Bate Dudley – the house and garden being considered the best in the college.

In 1825 he married Agnes, the youngest daughter of Sir Jacob Henry Astley, bart. and in 1827 resigned both his livings at Cottenham and Stretham in favour of the richer living of Leverington. He later moved to Benwell, Norfolk. He became a JP for Norfolk and the Isle of Ely and died in 1870. [SN112]

He must have spent some time in Stretham for he was one of the feoffees of Dr Rysley's charity appointed in 1824 along with Sir Charles Morgan, G.G. Morgan, John Reed, Edward Grainger & John Dimock senior.

By 1820 village property was described as 'extremely valuable as to exceed even the puff of the auctioneer' and work was underway on building Orchard House.

Out in the fen the first steam pumping engine was erected on Ten Mile River Bank, to be followed in 1820 by another one at Upware. The work on the Eau Brink Cut was completed and seemed to be successful, though in Spring 1824 heavy rains brought serious floods. Fens ordinarily dry 'were completely flooded and remained so throughout the summer in a wetter state than had been remembered for years'. A new Seven-holes sluice replaced the old Nine-holes sluice at Earith, helping to divert water out of the Old West River. In 1827 a new Ouse cut was made between Ely & Littleport bridge.

1827-1869 Henry Hervey Baber

Baber was born in 1775. His father was a barrister. Henry attended St Paul's school, London, and All Souls college, Oxford where he studied as a bible clerk and took his degree in 1805. In 1809 he married the daughter of Mr Harry Smith a banker. He obtained a job as sub-librarian of the Bodleian Library Oxford and in 1807 joined the staff of the library at the British Museum in London as Assistant Keeper of Printed Books being promoted in 1812 to be Keeper. He was regarded as "modest and unassuming, a good scholar and a devoted librarian"

He spent the next 25 years building up the collection but disagreed with the Trustees over a new scheme of cataloguing and resigned in 1837, following a new ruling that Museum Officials should not hold any other paid post.

In 1827 he had been appointed to be Rector of Stretham which was then worth about £600 pa, and on his retirement came to live permanently in the village. For a while the rectory was home to the Rev T.C.W. Seymour who sold his furniture, chaise and cellar of wines when he left in September 1829. In 1827 plans

were drawn up of alterations to be made to the rectory. A wing was added to the south end to provide service rooms and more accommodation, there were additions to the rear with a chimneystack on the north side. New windows were inserted and old windows altered, a garden veranda and canopy was built [BD].

The period of Baber's involvement with Stretham saw many other changes.

Steam Pumping Engine

In 1831 the Steam Pumping Engine was erected to drain the fenland East of the Old West river, new drains were cut and the windmills which had previously been used were taken down and sold off. All this was a large and expensive undertaking. [Appendix 9].

Enclosure

There was also great change in the agricultural system of the village. Open fields around Stretham were divided up into strips with each tenant being allotted strips, widely spaced from each other. By 1833 there was pressure for these to be enclosed - exchanged for blocks of land which would be easier to farm using machinery. To do this an Act of Parliament was necessary. That such developments were not welcomed by every-body was demonstrated at Lt Thetford where a group of villagers prevented the official notice being fixed to the church doors – even fighting off a contingent of police sent to enforce this essential first stage in the process. Flushed with their success the residents tried next day, Sunday, to stop Baber entering the church chanting 'No church today'. But the Rector persisted and entered the building, taking with him his warden, who was one of the protestors.

In Stretham the Rector was one of those initiating the Enclosure process. Other leading landowners involved were George Gould Morgan the Lord of the Manor, William Edwards Read, Thomas Waddelow Granger, Feofees of Parson's Charity, Feofees of Stretham, William Wright, William Blinch & Thomas Archer.

The Enclosure Act for Stretham was passed in 1835 but the procedure dragged on for two years. People had needed to register their claims, roads had been set out and some previous tracks closed off, fences had to be erected around public areas, and once plots were allocated the new owners needed to fence their new fields. To many this final cost of fencing may have been prohibitive. Henry Baber, as Rector, was allocated lands in lieu of tithes - payment from other farmers towards church costs - and his lands were to be fenced at public expense. He put up farmsteads on the church land, meeting the cost by selling three parcels of land at the Red Lion in October 1837. Baber bought these for himself and subsequently left the land to his son.

The process enclosed the open fields measuring 2,390 acres approximately half the total parish area.. The fields were named Crouch Field (East & West of Ely Rd), Whitecross and Brook Fields (North & South of Wilburton Rd) & Meadow Field (East of Cambridge Road), There were also open commons and fens. Snoot common, Middle common, Elford Closes, Chear Fen & Lazier Fen lay at the extreme south of the parish and Starlock Hay Fen common and Holt Fen in the South East.

Those who obtained the largest shares were William Edwards Read of Orchard House (228 acres), George Gould Morgan, lord of the Manor (173 acres), Thomas Waddelow Granger (142 acres) & the Ely Feofees (135 acres); the remaining land was spread evenly. Some of Richard Rysley charity lands were replaced by an allotment of 30½ acres in Starlock Hay Fen Common for the benefit of the school. Many other individuals were named on the Enclosure Award [Appendix 10 has more details]

Unlike many parishes Stretham had the benefit of charity allotments, ensuring that nobody need be completely deprived of a means of growing his own food – though restrictions applied and if a man deserted his wife and family, he was expelled from his allotment.

Probably many of the ordinary folk resented the changes that had been wrought on their way of life.

Coronation festivities, 1838

In 1838 Rev Baber helped organise the celebrations which marked the Coronation of the new Queen, Victoria. A good dinner was given to the poor in Mr Read's field, followed by donkey and foot-racing and other sports. When the poor left the field, attended by a rural band, they proceeded to the houses of the

principal contributors to the fund, serenading them with 'God Save the Queen' & expressing their thanks for the kind entertainment.

By now changes in the organisation of the poor law were under way. The Stretham overseers of the poor sold the parish houses which in 1836 had given shelter to 11 parishioners and put the money towards the costs of the new Union workhouse at Ely.

For those with money to spend on beer, a new public house, the Marquis of Granby was built. Francis Langford decided to retire as landlord of the Red Lion which was put up for sale. It was described as well situated and old established, having been in extensive trade for 100 years. It contained dining and sitting rooms, a tap room, bar, airy bedrooms, an arched ale cellar holding 20 barrel and a liqueur cellar. It benefited from its frontage on the main road along which the Kings Lynn to London mails and stagecoaches passed daily.

The days of the coaches were numbered however for already there was talk of a new railway from Ely to London. It finally opened in 1845, the line running through lands to the East of the parish. There were proposals for a station in the vicinity of the present railway crossing, but this came to nothing.

In 1844 Baber welcomed the arrival of a new curate, the Rev. Raynbird, who was to stay for 15 most turbulent years.

Fire, May Day 1844

On May Day 1844 came what the Cambridge Chronicle newspaper reported as: "One of the most awful fires which it was ever our province to record. The destruction of property is enormous; and when we say that not less than 25 houses, &c., have been razed to the ground, including habitations of wealthy agriculturalists and humble labourers, the reader will imagine for himself the extent of the misery which must be the consequence of this lamentable visitation".

The fire started at Mr John Wesley's blacksmith's shop in Read's Street, roughly opposite Brook Lane. Although at first it seemed just a small fire it spread with great speed to the adjoining farmyard and from there along the street. Soon the whole of Top Street was on fire and in little more than one hour 25 houses were ablaze, over an area of about 15 acres. The thatched buildings and farmyards were tinder dry and nothing could be done to check the flames.

The spread was so rapid that people who thought their own premises safe and went to help others found to their horror that they too were burnt out. Some lost 'every chip and every rag, save the garments they happened to have on at the time'.

There was no fire engine at Stretham but the engine from Haddenham was brought and thanks to the exertions of the fire fighters "may be attributed the saving of the great part of the village".

On the south side of Top Street the fire destroyed the property of John Wesley blacksmith & Mr Boultentaft, miller. William Wright, farmer lost his barns and stacks, though his house was saved. Mr S. Coy, farmer, lost his house barns, outbuildings, stacks and stock, Mr I Murfitt his house, furniture, barns etc as did Mr Lester, a butcher, Mr Jackson & S. Wright. Mr Philips, a baker, lost his house and 'in fact every thing'. There were six families in almshouses who were burnt out, along with John Wheeler, a shoemaker & brewer before the fire was checked on this side of the street at a cow-lodge belonging to Mr Hazel.

On the other side the victims were R. Wheeler - house and out-buildings, Mr Gibbons shoemaker who lost every thing, Mr Dimock, Mr Langford, a linen-draper - house, furniture, stock-in-trade and every thing. Mr J. Baxter, harness maker & J. Savidge, tailor also lost everything they possessed.

Mr T. Grainger, farmer, saw his barn, stables, every out-building and stock consumed. His barn was the largest in the county but nothing but the walls were left, and so intense was the heat that the brickwork seems in some places to have been almost molten. The house was saved. However Levi Langford, Mr Dring, a veterinary surgeon & Messrs Sennitt and Graves all lost their homes and outbuildings.

The desolation was heart-rending & the Church was made the receptacle of the furniture that could be saved. Those 30 families burnt out of house and home were looked after as well as could be, several taking shelter in the church until their premises could be rebuilt. The Rev Baber organised subscriptions for the relief of the suffering.

It was estimated that damage between £15,000 and £20,000 had been caused.

Work started to rebuild Top Street. Dr Rysley's charity cottages were built by Edward Wootton for the total cost of £472.16.11½ on a plot of ground then called Lincoln's Gardens. Nearby Samuel Coy arranged for the building of Hylton House. Others followed suit.

1845 saw the death of G.G. Morgan, Lord of the Manor & owner of 1,213 of the 4,085 acres in the parish; his estate passed to his daughters. He seems not to have been affected by the fire, nor is he listed amongst those contributing to the relief of the sufferers.

As part of the reconstruction process surveyors were appointed to make sewers throughout the village in 1849.

The 1850s

In 1850 came more fires, even more frightening than those of 1844.

In January a fire broke out in a barn belonging to Isaac Murfitt, butcher, which being old and thatched was soon destroyed. Then Mr W Sennitt's large, old fashioned farmhouse standing close to the barn, caught fire but fortunately the wind blowing from the west sent the fire across an orchard & the farm buildings and corn were saved through the great exertion of the villagers. Most of Mr Sennitt's furniture was got out; though much was broken and some of it disappeared into the darkness.. Fire engines from Ely and Haddenham attended. From the place where the fire started there was no doubt it was the act of an incendiary.

In September 1850 things took a more serious turn with outbreaks in the Chapel Street area. Fire broke out in a bean stack belonging to the Rev. H. H. Baber. It soon extended to a large barn & various stacks & appeared to threaten destruction in all that part of the village. The old Red Lion Inn and part of the house occupied by Mr Parish the butcher was damaged. Fortunately by the exertions of some, and the timely arrival of the Haddenham & Ely engines, the fire was got under. The total loss was estimated at £1,500.

Within weeks another most destructive fire broke out in what the Cambridge Independent Press described as 'the unfortunate and it would almost appear doomed village'. This time a straw stack in the yard belonging to Mr Edward Dimock, (whose property was partially destroyed by a fire the week before), was found to be ablaze, and soon spread to all the other stacks in the yard. The fire then extended to three cottages on the opposite side of the road, belonging to Mrs Ann Blinch, which were all consumed. Two other cottages belonging to Mr Clay of Haddenham were also burnt down as was a cottage belonging and occupied by Isaac Murfitt & another belonging to Mr John Wright. Mr Dimock's house, which was separated from the burning barn by a yard, was saved from the fire owing to the exertions of the fire brigades.

The agents of the Norwich Union, Sun. and the Suffolk Fire Offices were in attendance all night and the greater part of the following day, giving directions, and aiding and assisting to extinguish the flames.

The Independent Press commented: "One is at a loss to conjecture the motives by which the wretch who caused this wanton destruction of property and endangered the lives of many persons, both last week and the week before, (for there cannot be much doubt that the two fires are the work of the same incendiaries), is actuated. Mr Dimock bears an excellent character as a straight forward and upright man, and not a word to his prejudice has been heard during the last exciting times.

"The public houses and beer shops were at the request of the police all closed on the night of the fire by 12 o'clock, and the labourers were certainly some what more orderly, and worked better than at the previous fire.

But we heard of one case where a young friend of ours, assisting to put out the fires was told by a labourer that 'he had better keep quiet and leave the fire alone- it was meant to burn'", added the paper.

A meeting was called of farmers and principal inhabitants to enquire into the circumstances of the fires. Baber acted as chairman. The Chief Constable of the Isle of Ely conducted an inquiry, which provided some clues, but came to no conclusion.

Then a couple of weeks later came another fire, this time in a stack belonging to William Wheeler. Five nights later fire broke out in a barn belonging to Abraham Murfitt, soon spreading to some cottages which were destroyed. "The village is in a general state of alarm, this being the fourth fire we have had in less than so many weeks. Everything has been done that can be thought of, but no traces can be found likely to lead to the author of these diabolical deeds", recorded the Cambridge Chronicle.

A tramping labourer was arrested on suspicion, but released. It was decided to appoint watchmen, buy fire hooks to assist in pulling the burning thatch off buildings and consider buying a parish fire engine. One of the fire hooks was fixed to the wall of a barn in Cage Lane.

Fire again broke out in February 1851 when a large haulm stack belonging to William Wheeler, butcher, standing in the White Lion Yard, High Street, was set on fire. Since the area had not been rebuilt following the earlier fire of October 1850 only the stack was lost. Police made enquiries but no culprit was identified.

They had more success in 1855 when two fires broke out, one near a cottage cellar, the second in a stack near Stretham ferry. The latter was proved to have been caused by a tramp, who claimed that it was accidental. He had begged some lucifer matches from a local cottager and one of these had caused the blaze. He was sentenced to four years in prison. After that things seemed to have quietened down

The village cage, in Cage Lane, was pulled down in 1855 and the bricks used in making a wall and sluice in the town pond opposite (the present Jubilee Garden)

Following the death of its landlord King Charles, the "Charles in the Oak" pub near Stretham ferry (the present Lazy Otter) was sold in 1851. It had been rebuilt following a fire in April 1844. It was advertised with an "inexhaustible supply of brick earth", which had presumably been used in the massive rebuilding following the fires.

In 1851 the census shows there were 14 beer houses & 4 old pubs for a population of 1,231, an increase of 124 over 1841. There were 250 inhabited houses, 4 uninhabited and 11 being built.

According to the census Henry Baber lived with his wife and daughter Helen at the Rectory House. Also living there was Robert Raynbird, his curate, who had been born in Bacton, Suffolk and 4 servants - two housemaids, one cook and one footman. That year Rev Baber built a barn and stables opposite the rectory for which he contracted with an Ely builder, Richard Freeman, at a cost of £190

Samuel Coy, "gentleman farmer" who had built himself a new farm house, Hylton House in Top Street, following the 1844 fire, sold up in June 1851, disposing of his various property & later his farming implements for ready money

In 1858 Robert Norman took Tiled House Farm, Berridge the Engine Farm, King & William Charles High Fen Farm, William Driver Bridge House. But two local farmers committed suicide.

In November 1858 Thomas Waddelow Granger died. He was one of the biggest local farmers and his property and stock at Grange Farm on the Cambridge Road made nearly £2,000 when it was sold in January 1859.

But the biggest talking point of 1858 was the death of William Edwards Read of Orchard House, aged 70. He died leaving insufficient funds to pay his funeral expenses & discharge mortgage on his house. He had married Mary Ann Granger in 1826 & between 1830 and 1845 had eleven children. Read had borrowed £5,000 in 1834, at the start of the enclosure period and another £8,000 in 1854, some of which had paid off

his earlier loan. At his death his executors raised £3,000 on security of the property, which under the terms of his will could not be sold until his youngest child reached the age of 21 years. His widow Mary died in 1862.

To complete the transformation of the village's main characters in 1861 the Lordship of the Manor was divided between Lt-Col (afterwards General) Sir G.H.S. Willis & the Rev William Titterton Marsh, whose wives were successors to G.G. Morgan.

It was not only rich farmers who were facing financial difficulties. In 1857 money was found to have gone missing from the Ancient Order of Shepherd's lodge. It was kept in a locked cash box which was placed inside another box that had two locks. This big box was kept in the bedroom of the landlord of the Red Lion. It seemed a secure process – except that all three keys were in the hands of one person.

Meanwhile the ordinary tragedies continued. In 1860 Sarah Pope wife of Benjamin Pope, a railway labourer, died of typhus, leaving 7 children, 4 ill with the fever. One of them, Emily also died.. That year Henry Baber buried one of his servants, Diana Dolby, and at Christmas in 1861 he lost his wife Ann.

Meanwhile the process of enclosure had now reached Grunty Fen, which had been used by the Stretham poor for turf digging. They feared these rights would be lost in the enclosure process and in 1858 instructed a barrister to put their case to the Enclosure Commissioners. Once the process got underway it brought more work, but in May 1859 labourers went on strike & there were fears that a riot would take place. The parish was allocated plots of land including an area set out for a playground.

In 1859 fires once more devastated areas of the village. The first was accidental, a crack in a chimney setting fire to thatch. PC Jeffrey was quickly on the scene and helped to put it out. It was followed in March by a fire in Green End which destroyed three thatched clay-built cottages. Samuel Parish recorded in his diary: "Matthew Sargent had a pig burnt. He turned the pig out and he ran into the firing lodge and was burnt to death but the pig sty was saved. His house was burnt, the widow Gibbon's house too. This was on Sunday 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning". Then in July the farm premises of William Blinch was consumed, the fire starting in a straw stack.

The 1860s

In September 1861 the incendiaries struck again A thatched cottage belonging to John Bent in Green End, an area covered by a very dense mass of old buildings, was set on fire. It spread until seven cottages and a barn were destroyed. Fire fighting was hindered by a strong wind, a lack of water and a large crowd of onlookers who took no part.

In January 1862 two cottages burnt down and two more were pulled down to prevent further spread of the flames – it was definitely arson. Next month three thatched tenements caught fire, the cause was not traced. The third fire broke out in June when the back part of an old cottage caught fire, once more arson was suspected.

Some relief from the gloom was granted when the wedding of the future King Edward VII and Princess Alexandra of Denmark in March 1863 gave the village an opportunity to enjoy themselves. The streets were decorated with flags and a triumphal arch and there was an afternoon of sports and amusements – donkey races, men wheeling barrows blindfolded, & fire balloons. 900 people enjoyed a tea in Mr Mitchell's large barn.

In 1865 a new railway was constructed through Grunty Fen and the village gained its own station, albeit in Wilburton parish. The line was formally opened in April 1866. People did not anticipate great things as far as passenger traffic was concerned but believed it would benefit the farmers in this largely corn-growing district.

But in 1865 Stretham, like many other villages, was hit by an outbreak of cattle plague that devastated local herds and caused great hardship. A third of the herds were affected with farmers Muncey, Sennit, Hazel & Fyson, of Plantation, badly hit.

By 1865 W.E. Read's youngest son had reached his majority and it was time for Orchard House to be sold. Read's daughters, Mary Denham Read and Frederica Granger Read were the highest bidders for Orchard House and other land, including the site of the present Post Office. Grange Farm, the adjacent Brickmakers' Arms pub and Dimmock's Cote farm were also sold.

Orchard House was by then the residence of Frederick Granger. When he died in 1867 it was bought by John Wright for £600 & the shop sold to Briggs Savage, whose initials are in the brickwork at the front.

The weather conspired against the farmers. July 1868 was very hot, there was no grass for stock, carrots died early & at harvest the heat was so intense people couldn't work. William Morris & family decided they had had enough, like others before them they emigrated to America in April 1868.

The Rev Baber was interested in the education of village children. In 1846 there had been 244 children receiving education. A private school kept by dissenters catered mainly for the children of tradesmen and small farmers but most attended a church school which was held on weekdays, weekday evenings and on Sundays in hired premises. It would seem that many attended part-time, for the National Society report showed expenses of only £67.18s. a year, although a staff of eight was employed. Lack of endowments prevented any real progress, though village charities made some donations the rector was the sole private contributor. He started to accumulate money for a new school, but his advancing age prevented him carrying the project to completion.

The Rector also turned his attention to the fabric of his church. Collections for the repair of the church spire and tower were begun in 1861 & in 1866 the steeple was repaired & new weathercock put up.

In 1867 he presented a new stained glass East window and repaired the church spire – though there was criticism that when the spire was completed it did not come to a point but was crowned with an “ugly mushroom”. In 1867 a vestry meeting recommended voluntary subscriptions for colouring walls and ceilings & repairing pillars on the north side of the church.

Henry Baber died on Easter Day in 1869 in his 94th year, the oldest incumbent in the Diocese. He had continued his clerical duties almost until his death. He was buried in the church, where his memorial can be found.

1869-1885 Hugh Pigot

Hugh Pigot had been born in Market Drayton, Shropshire and was educated in Oxford. He had previously been at Wisbech St Peter & was in his late 40s when he came to Stretham with his wife, Dorothea & a young family of three daughters.

The new Rector was determined to improve the village & in 1869 he offered land on the north side of the church to be consecrated for an addition to the churchyard. A new wall was made around the burial ground in 1870.

Pigot continued the work of his predecessor in the provision of new schools. When he came to the village there was a boys' school in hired premises, adjacent to the entrance gate to Orchard House. It was a small room with a brick floor, crowded with children. Its headmaster was William Boothman, who had been appointed in 1864 in succession to David Parish.

By 1870 a girls' school had been established, but Inspectors reported: “There is a great deal to be done before the school can be got into thoroughly good order. A low room, hardly fit for school purposes.” Improvements were slow and in May 1871 the Inspectors warned they would not continue to pay a grant if the buildings remained in their present state. ‘A wooden floor is indispensable and the very objectionable arrangement of the offices (toilets) must be at once altered’.

There was opposition to his plans and an ‘agitator’ tried to prejudice feeling against it. However with the aid of local subscriptions, a grant from the Diocesan Board, contributions from the village charities and nearly

£400 from Pigot himself the new schools were opened in November 1872 on the site of the old tithe barn, which had been incorporated into the school.

The buildings, one for the boys, another for the girls alongside, were designed by a well-known architect J. P. St Aubyn.

At its opening all the pupils attended a crowded church service conducted by the rector supported by a large number of clergymen from surrounding parishes. Afterwards 200 scholars sat down to a bountiful supply of tea and cakes, while in the Girls School village ladies catered from between 200 and 300 people at 6d each. When on 19th May 1872 the children, with the rector at the head marched into the new school the youngsters at first appeared bewildered, having so much room after being cramped in the old school.

In 1874 the charity trustees got permission to convert the old school building into two tenements for the residence of two poor widows.

Church restoration

Pigot now turned his attention to the church itself. Bazaars were held and money raised towards the restoration of the building. He gave £1,000 and the Misses Baber £450 towards the £3,200 estimate. The architect appointed was J.P. St Aubyn, who had designed the school, and the builder Mr Brown of Kings Lynn.

In June 1874 the Bishop of Ely preached the last sermon before the complete restoration of the church, all seats were full. Subsequent services were held in the schoolroom. In September the school children were taken to witness the laying of one of the principal stones of the new church by the rector's eldest daughter. Afterwards 240 children took tea at the rectory.

Rebuilding took two years. The reopening in June 1876 was attended by the Bishop of Ely and thirty local clergyman who processed from the rectory lawn into the church. The choir was surpliced for the first time. In the evening another service was held when the sermon was preached by the Rev Harry Baber, whose father had previously been rector.

The restoration had removed the old gallery, added two transepts, widened the north aisle, built an arcade on the north side, added an organ loft and new seats. Two new bells were installed. Except for the Norman buttress the church was now of the C14 decorated style, the parts removed being C15. The Rector was praised: "there are restorations which are no restoration, Rev Pigot had spared neither pains nor money to make the church as beautiful as he could". Not all commentators have been so enthusiastic.

Josiah Sennitt described the old building; "there was only one gallery, which was reached by a staircase from the belfry. Mr Tom Driver was then the leader of the singing. I well remember the three-decker pulpit, and no doubt, as a boy, I have stood in all of them. I used to go with my grandmother to the morning services on Sundays, and when standing on the seat I could just see over the top to the second deck, the minister in his white surplice. Then I saw him coming down the aisle and past my pew into the Vestry for his black gown, then go to the top deck, where I could see him better. The last corpse buried in the old church was that of Mr Edward Granger. The vault was in the centre of the church, just under the baptismal font. The font was removed and the vault opened to receive the coffin" [Ely Standard 1.12.1922]

A new font was presented by the sister of Edward Dimock, whose child was the first to be christened in it in June 1876. Two new church bells were also installed. Restoration costs were finally cleared by Miss Helen Baber, daughter of the former rector. She died in 1881 and was interred in the family vault.

Josiah also described the church clock: "the old church clock had only one hand, the hour hand, and us boys could see it from the schoolroom window; we often thought the clock had stopped, it seemed so long between 11 and 12". This was replaced by the present clock in February 1877.

In 1884 the village gained a new place of worship with the opening of a new mission hall and reading room by the London Evangelistic Mission, a cause greatly supported by the Lady of the Manor. It opened in

January 1884, following a gospel tent which had visited the village 16 months earlier. Their greatest object was to preach Christ and Christ crucified and the resident evangelist was Mr Newell. The building was erected on the corner of Cage Lane (on the site of the old cage) to the designs of a London architect who had erected thousands of such corrugated iron buildings. It included a coffee room and lavatory. On the opening evening 600 people crowded into the main room.

One unchanging aspect of local life is the village feast, described in the Cambridge Chronicle for May 1877. "The feast commences on the 3rd Sunday in May and lasts four days and always attracts friends. This year it coincided with Whitsun and the trains brought many visitors on the Saturday and there were large congregations on Sunday. On the first three days children set off early with cans or pitchers to the farmhouses where they are given free milk. With this milk and wheat, sugar, currants and spices they make "frumenty". The Monday afternoon and all day Tuesday is kept as a holiday and everybody dresses in their best. Weeks before the feast the women start cleaning every nook and corner of their homes, rooms are whitewashed or papered and chimney sweeps do a brisk trade. If two women meet on the street they ask 'Have you done your cleaning yet?' and if anybody neglected to clean her house she would be frowned upon by her neighbours".

The sporting needs of the village were also enhanced in 1879 when it was decided to hire a field for a recreation ground, the yearly rent of £6 being met from letting the old recreation ground in Grunty Fen.

The death of William Blinch in July 1879 was followed by the sale of his considerable estate in July 1880, including Gravel Farm which was brought by Charles Wright, & property in Green End, while more property in that area changed hands at the same time following the death of Stephen Read.

Throughout Pigot's period the village economy had been undergoing great change with the excavation of Coprolites which provided a rich source of fertiliser, more remunerative than traditional crops. Now the steam engine had proved successful in draining the soil it was possible to dig pits without them immediately filling with water. At first farmers used their own labour to extract it, but when they hit large seams it was necessary to bring in contractors who brought a gang with him. It may also have brought some villagers' work, though the 1871 census for Stretham shows only 6 men diggers and 2 girls as pickers. Against this such an influx of strangers caused disruption.

In 1866 John Denton had purchased 30 acres of one field & rented another along a two-mile stretch from Stretham Ferry Bridge along the northern bank of the Old West and on to Lt Thetford. Then in 1870 Thos Hall was anxious to get started on a new seam in Stretham & erected a washing mill and shed. A ramp would be erected up the river bank to barrow the coprolite up to barges.

While the ground was being dug over, up to 15 feet deep, the land was out of cultivation and in the first documented agreement; 1871, the yearly tenant, William Drever was compensated for 2½ acres a year out of cultivation for 4 years.

Several areas were worked around Manor farm, under Middle Common, down Green End opposite the engine and an area one mile south of the church was worked between 1875 and 1883. There was a revival at the end of the 1880s when due to high unemployment some landowners allowed work to continue at reduced royalties. Though coprolite digging brought employment for some it may also have reduced the land available for traditional farming & in 1881 an agricultural labourers union meeting attracted 30 people.

A newspaper report of November 1891 records "These small works are great boon to village as they employ all the surplus labour which otherwise would be out of work during winter" Another beneficiary would have been the landlord of the Royal Oak, frequented by the diggers.

The Royal Oak may well have seen additional passing trade for in 1875 the Cambridge to Ely Turnpike Trust had expired. The turnpike gates & tollhouses were pulled down, though one survived on the Wilburton Road.

The Rev Hugh Pigot died in September 1884, some seven months after his wife. The whole village mourned his passing & he was buried on the West side of the churchyard. His fifteen years in the village had seen considerable changes. His curate for the past three years, Rev. C.G. Griffinhoofe left the same month.

1885-1906 J. William Cockshott

John William Cockshott was born in Addingham, York and was 59 when appointed to Stretham having been previously vicar of Burwell and rural dean of Fordham.

He is remembered by Emily Talbot (nee Wesley) as: "somewhat pompous, but his second wife was a dear. He had one daughter by his first wife who was inclined to be what was then considered to be High Church. Miss Mary had a friend who was very well off and who presented the church with a very nice brass processional cross and some very lovely lace for an altar cloth" Emily has left a vivid picture of life at this time. [SB66 - Appendix 11]

His arrival in January 1885 coincided with the final address in the old Methodist chapel before its rebuilding. The foundation stone was laid in July 1885 and the new building, designed by J. Gunton & acclaimed to be one of the prettiest in the area, was opened in December 1886. [SB66 - Appendix 12]. The Mission Hall also continued with 300 attending an open-air service in June 1893

Cockshott was an energetic and hardworking vicar who initiated many developments within the church & parish. By 1896 he had supplied the Diocese, from his own pocket, with three Church Army vans at a cost of £100 and the money for 6 horses needed to pull them from place to place. [SN147]

At the church a new organ was inaugurated in November 1886, replacing a harmonium. Built by Messrs Walker of London it had a 'rich, full and cathedral-like tone'. The initial funding had been begun by Rev. Pigot. In 1892 a 5th bell was placed in the church tower, at a cost of £38.5.0 which had been raised by public contributions with the curate, Rev. E. Teesdale, having overall responsibility.

The church clock face was repainted & repaired in 1897, the cost being covered by a collection at a special jubilee night service [SN129]. 1902 saw church heating, while lamps were placed in the church in 1904 and the nave and chancel painted. Then in 1906, at a special communion, the Church was dedicated to St James the Great to distinguish it from St James the Less.

Within the village there were various developments. 1886 saw the opening of the Parish room which was intended to be used for mother's meetings, classes for religious instruction & in winter months as a free reading room. The rector provided much of the £200 it was to cost when fitted out. In 1901 the parish room was opened two nights a week for recreation and improvement for young men from 7 to 10pm. Many other initiatives were started: a brass & string band conducted by the school headmaster Alfred Wheeler, a parish library, Temperance Society, women's meetings, a Girls Friendly Society. Dinners to 100 labouring poor were given at Christmas 1890 & 1891, there were choir outings by railway, open-air services at the Ferry and an annual Horticultural show and athletic sports. [SN131] One tradition, the Feast Sunday Friendly Society parade, was probably held for the first time in 1897.

The churchyard was becoming full and in 1886 it was agreed to purchase a new burial ground from the Lord of the Manor, together with an approach road at a cost of £100. It was divided into consecrated and unconsecrated ground. The first burial on 1st January 1887 was that of an 11-year old boy. [SN117].

Queen Victoria's jubilee in 1887 saw the village decorated with flags & some 600 people sat down to a meal. A special service in church was followed by sports that were enjoyed by all. Similar celebrations were held ten years later for the diamond jubilee with a dinner for 100 over-60s, widows & widowers & two teas, one to 280 children & another open to the whole of village which 400 people attended. All meals were served in a large barn belonging to Henry Lister. Then the children, carrying flags, & headed by the band, marched around the village. The evening was devoted to athletic sports [EWG 25.6.1897]

In 1899 a group of 17 London children came to the village on two weeks holiday, and others were sent by Dr Barnardo's to be boarded out with foster families [SN131]. In 1901 Cockshott described the experience: "During the last four weeks Stretham has had 35 London holiday children boarded out in several cottage houses in this village and Thetford. This, with 16 children from Dr Barnardo's homes, gives an air of liveliness to our villages during the harvest season. We cannot help seeing that the intercourse of town

children in rural parishes is calculated to provide a spirit of sympathy between rich and poor". This scheme continued for a number of years.

A School Board was set up in 1889 to deal with the growing numbers of children. The Church school was leased to the Board and in 1893, following the appointment of a new headmaster, Alfred Wheeler, it was enlarged to take 256 children. An additional school for the Infants was constructed at the bottom of High Street. An Evening Continuation School was established to encourage men and women over 21 to continue the elementary knowledge picked up in the village schools [ERDM Oct 1895], whilst as part of a programme of Technical Education a contest for agricultural labourers in ploughing, hedging and ditching was held in December 1895.

The newly-formed Stretham Parish Council held its first meeting in the Schoolroom in January 1895. The Rev Canon Cockshott was selected chairman and John Wesley vice-chairman. They together with J.B. Dimock, George Driver, W. Hopkins, Henry Lister, Henry Lister junior, J.H. Savidge and F.O. Sennitt comprised the first council. The chairman was interviewed in the Cambridge Independent Press in 27 November 1896. John Wesley spoke of : "a healthy nonconformist & Liberal part of the community but as a whole it is not progressive ... in 1844 we had a tremendous fire which burnt half of the cottages down and I should like to see another to burn some that are left ... The lower end is badly supplied with water, the only source is rain water and soak wells ... on the supply of public water in Green End, the council decided it neither practical or desirable" [SN142 - Appendix 14].

In 1901 the old 24-feet deep well near the Baptist chapel was re-opened & a pump erected [SN57]. If there was a shortage of water, there was no shortage of beer. A return of licensed houses for 1906 shows 14 pubs, there would also have been various beer retailers [SB23 - Appendix 14].

But things were becoming difficult. Although the coprolites were again being worked - "These small works a great boon as they employ all the surplus labour who would otherwise be out of work during the winter" (1891) by November 1896 the Rector recorded that many young men had moved out of the parish to make a living.

By 1899 the decline in agriculture had become more acute. "The general complaint seems to be a lack of labourers to gather in the harvest. Though our total population is increasing, our agricultural labourers are decreasing. Owing to the ruinous price of corn, there has been a great reduction in the employment of labourers. We have now mostly only old men who understand their work. Young labourers are swelling the tide that is drifting to London, or other large towns, and in too many cases to become inmates of our unions (workhouses)", wrote the Rector in the Ely Diocesan Magazine [SB41].

1897 saw the bankruptcy of Briggs Savidge, grocer, draper, wine & spirit merchant and beet retailer. He had expanded Luke Curtis' shop, (now the Post Office), his initials B.S. and the date 1868 inscribed in a stone above the door. It was a veritable emporium with bread baked on the premises. He had also established another shop in Ely but his business failed and the large important site in the centre of the village stood empty for many years.

Meanwhile Joseph Wesley was becoming a major employer. He was son of the blacksmith at whose premises the awful fire of 1844 had originated, and by 1881 was a veterinary surgeon and machinist employing 12 men and two boys. His son, John who lived at Grove House farmed 18 acres and employed two men. Between them they developed as steam cultivating and threshing contractors, corn, cake, coal & manure merchants with their premises at the corner of Green End. In 1898 he was granted a patent for an improved safety guard for steam driven chaff cutters. [Appendix 15].

The turn of the century saw the loss of two prominent landowners. In October 1898 Charles Wright, of Orchard House, died in his pew in the Baptist chapel. The impact on the congregation was such that the service was abandoned. He had played a major part in many local organisations, & had an exceedingly retentive memory, delighting to talk of old times and old friends. He was 71.

The other was the death in 1900 of G.H.S. Willis, by then the sole Lord of the Manor. A trust was established for the benefit of his son, Harry W.M. Willis as tenant for life. The estate comprised most of the land to the east of the village, from the A10 to the Old West and a great swathe south of the Engine

The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 was marked by memorial services in the churches and the Mission Hall. Suggestions that the road from the Mission Hall to Brook Lane should be named Victoria Road were rejected. Perhaps such reminders of mortality prompted the purchase in 1902 of a hand bier.

The coronation of King Edward VII was postponed in July 1901 owing to the King's illness, but by then the village had already arranged the food for Coronation parties to some 500 adults and 250 children, so they went ahead. The Coronation sports were however delayed, but when held attracted a large gathering of competitors and onlookers.

In February 1906 a violent storm of thunder and lightning, combined with a hurricane of wind and large hailstones hit the village. A large straw stack belonging to Mrs Driver of Hill farm was blown away, several trees on Manor Farm blown down and the fantail of the windmill shattered. Then in July 1906 the heaviest rainfall since 1879 flooded village streets.

In October 1906 the Rector, Canon Cockshott, resigned after 57 years ministry, 21 of them in Stretham. At a presentation ceremony he spoke of his advancing years and thanked his congregation for the many proofs of their sincere affection. He made way for a new, younger, minister, Rev Samuel S. Stitt.

1906-1945 Rev Samuel Stewart Stitt

Rev Samuel S. Stitt came into residence in November 1906. The church was filled to overflowing at his induction, though his predecessor Canon Cockshott was unable to attend. The contrast between the venerable elderly rector and his successor must have been great. Stitt was much younger, had been a Chaplain in the South African war, was a former journalist, and had a car (though he couldn't drive)!

The new minister addressed his congregation through the pages of the Ely Rural Deanery Magazine for December 1906. "I hope all the parish will regard me as their friend ... and they will make all allowances for any mistakes that I through ignorance might make" [SB41].

Stitt came with great enthusiasm and quickly instituted many developments and improvements. The choir improved weekly – he had plans for three choirs, men in the chancel, ladies in the front seats of the nave and school children by the organ. There was a Boxing Night choir soiree, with an exhibition of Jui Jitsu. The church bells rang out again with a team of ten new recruits. There was a new working men's club. House to house visitations were begun by Rector and his wife, with a team of district visitors who reported to the rector all urgent cases of sickness.

In February 1909 the Old Age Pensioners were entertained to tea in the school room, an event organised by a strong parochial committee under the leadership of the Rector and the Rev Routledge of the Mission Hall. The oldest guest, William Smith (84) had never been more than 20 miles from Stretham. A photograph was taken to commemorate the occasion [SN142].

To provide exercise and excitement for younger men a branch of the Territorial Army was formed, men drilling in the rectory paddock, and another 'army' – the Church Army came in to help those who lived out in the fens.

All of this Stitt recorded in the Deanery Magazine, filling the space he was allocated and seeking more for "as an old journalist I could easily fill it, or better, start a magazine of my own".

Within the church itself there was work on the roof of the chancel, nave & aisle, fresh plaster in many parts, the belfry was cleaned & two ancient tombstones of former rectors taken down and placed in the south transept. There was a new carpet in the sanctuary, a new altar frontal, ten new lamps to light the church and oil stove for heating. H.J. Lister presented an improved and enlarged church organ.

The rector was shocked at the condition of the churchyard, where sheep had been used to keep the grass down. He employed a man to tend it, but the income from the benefice was not what it was and he sought help to pay for the labour and a church cleaner. He also appealed for more funds on the collection plate.

Meanwhile the parish council pushed for a telephone office, which opened in 1907 and for street lighting.

The village cross was reported to be in a dangerous condition, the top portion liable to fall at any time. The head had been badly fractured in several places owing to the rusting and consequent expansion of the ironwork which held the weather vane. A subscription was organised for its repair. The top was removed, repaired by Rattee & Kett and replaced in November 1909 – but without the weathercock, which was moved to the school bell tower.

In 1910 the church steeple needed repairs. A steeplejack went to the top & brought down and repaired the weathercock. He urged the parish to spend money on steeple repairs but Isaac Asplin became a village hero when he climbed the spire and reported that the work was not needed.

The village feast of 1910 saw a new innovation. For the first time the Friendly Societies banner was paraded, draped with black bands to mourn the death of the King.

In April 1911 one of the most disastrous fires for many years broke out at the farm of Thomas Jacobs, beside the Baptist Chapel. Some thirty head of cattle, chained in a barn, were roasted alive. The horror of the scene, the bellowing of the doomed animals, the stench of their burning bodies and the sight of the burnt corpses attracted widespread interest, and a number of postcard views were published

26th August 1912 saw heavy rainfall from morning to night. The lower part of the village, from Cambridge Road along past the Mission Hall to the allotments was inundated. Several houses were flooded, the water pouring through the lower rooms for hours. In some fields the shocks of corn were surrounded by water.

In March 1913 the schoolroom was full to overflowing when a member of the Charity Commissioners attended to explain their new scheme for the administration of village charities. The new scheme provided for the payment of subscriptions in aid of any dispensary, infirmary, hospital or convalescent home and the travelling expenses of patients visiting them. It also allowed for the provision of nurses, midwives & medical aid. Villagers felt that it would reduce the amount of money available for distribution to the poor. The meeting became very rowdy and ended by rejecting the new scheme. It was nonetheless put into operation and used until replaced in 1999.

In November 1913 the village found itself at the forefront of controversy. In January 1911 an Insurance Act came into force which enabled the low paid to have free medical treatment and sickness benefit. Although popular with the poor there was considerable opposition from doctors who saw it as a threat to their livelihood. In Wisbech only two doctors agreed to operate the new panel system. In 1913 Dr Horace Dimock was appointed to cope with the flood of panel patients. He was not welcomed by the other doctors, the nameplate was pulled off his door, and he was repeatedly called out on non-existent calls. Then he was accused of posting offensive postcards to notable people and was arrested. He came home to his parents' house at Stretham, tired and depressed, having not slept for three nights. Next day he was found dead in bed from an overdose of morphine and veronal. 400 people crowded Stretham for his funeral and watched the coffin carried on the hand bier to the church where Stitt conducted the service. In Wisbech crowds attacked the houses and surgeries of those doctors they felt had hounded Dimock, police reinforcements had to be called in and the Riot Act invoked.

March 1914 saw hundreds of mourners at another funeral, that of George Perry Sennitt. He lived at Rose Cottage Farm, Brook Lane & was a major poultry dealer sending tons of poultry from the village station. He was a strict nonconformist and the Baptist chapel was packed for his funeral, while some 500 villagers assembled at the graveside

1914-18 War

The outbreak of the Great War in August 1914 saw a United service on the Recreation Ground, where over 400 people were addressed by the Rector and Rev Routledge of the Mission Hall, urging them to stand united, sinking all sectarian differences. A Stretham War Relief Committee was established & sent out tobacco and cigarettes to the troops.

Stretham soon contributed its quota of numbers called up including Percy W Routledge & Walter Murfitt who was in India when the war was declared & went over with the first contingent. Others soon followed.

In October 1914 a new Military Road was proposed along the existing droveways from Stretham to Dimmock's Cote and Wicken. It would be needed to move men and munitions quickly from the Midlands to the East Coast to repel any enemy invasion. A large number of men were employed & by May 1915 the road was built. But there was disagreement over who should pay for the bridges over the rivers Cam & Old West so they were not constructed and temporary pontoon bridges were put in place.

In January 1915 Stitt wrote in the Deanery magazine about German atrocities. More village lads joined up including John Badcock, Sidney Canham & P.J. Winter. By March came news that Privates Sindall, Frohock & Sadler had been taken Prisoner of War.

One early casualty of the war was Private Edward Lythell who died as result of a taxi accident in Birmingham in May 1915. Private Archie Sennitt was killed in action, shot in the head in the neighbourhood of Ypres in June 1915 while Private James Baxter was recovering in a Fulham hospital having been wounded in the head. There was happier news in July of Walter Murfitt who was recommended for conspicuous bravery & promoted to Sergeant, but he was killed by shellfire in October and buried behind the firing line.

The war machine needed more and more recruits. By July 1915 there were 48 Stretham men serving from the male population of 504 - 9.5%. A recruiting party, 70 strong, arrived in the village accompanied by a Brass Band & was entertained to lunch by the Rector before marching to the recreation ground for speeches.

At a memorial church service in November 1915 a large congregation mourned Abel Clark, Walter Murfitt & Archie Sennitt, while John Winters had been "missing" since May. There was happier news of Russell M. Wheeler who was promoted temporary Lieutenant, Middlesex Regiment.

"Stretham has sent out the bravest & best of her sons to fight in the cause of freedom & honour" reported the Ely Standard correspondent in May 1916. "Nearly every home has a representative on the battlefield & the brave lads at the front will feel a thrill of pride in the old village when they learn what has been accomplished by those left at home. Truly Stretham has caught the spirit of the age and in the cleansing fires of affliction is emerging from its lethargy and taking its share in the self-sacrificing efforts which can alone exalt a nation".

But by now the war was demanding yet more men and Conscription was introduced. Now exemption tribunals adjudicated on those who would be allowed to stay to keep the home fires burning and those who had to go. Some cases give an insight into the hardship of those at home.

From the Post Office Ernest John Swan applied for exemption for himself & his brother Walter. Their mother was an invalid, he managed the shop & his brother did the majority of postal business. Ernest was exempted, but not Walter.

Farmer Charles Wright applied unsuccessfully for several of his men in June 1916. He explained that he had lost 6 single and 3 married men off the farm & was only left with 11. He had advertised for 3 weeks for a yardman but without reply. There was a formula for farm labour: 2 men for every five working horses, five men for steam cultivating sets, one man and one feeder for a threshing tackle. Village mechanics and wheelwrights were not to go if they were necessary at home. Wesley's traction engines were busy breaking up ground that had not previously been farmed but still had difficulty retaining men. Miller Thomas Lawrence, who worked the Stretham mill, did 30 to 40 sacks of flour and 60 sacks of grist a week with the part-time help of one man, aged 62 was conditionally exempted.

Meanwhile the news continued to come back from the front: Private J.D. Wheeler who had been home on leave until 2nd May, was wounded five days later. Joe Stubbins was wounded in his left eye, Private Leonard Constable in the chin, right arm & left leg.

Corporal Frank Baxter was killed when a bullet entered his heart during an assault, Albert George Wesley was killed on 8th August 1916 having been home on leave in June. Private William Henry Constable, home on leave in July was killed in action on 18th August 1916.

The roll of honour in the church porch by August 1916 contained 118 names of those fighting men from Stretham and Thetford and a memorial service was held at the Mission Hall to commemorate the twelve who were now dead.

George Swan received the Military Medal for distinguished conduct during the Battle of the Somme in July 1916, as did Corporal Russell Routledge, son of the Mission Hall minister. Then in January 1917 the youngest of the Reverend Routledge's sons, Ernest, was called up, despite his pleas that the 18-year old lad should be exempted on the grounds of ill health.

19 year-old A.E. Wright applied for exemption for himself. He was small holder & carter; who farmed 9½ acres himself & worked for others. He was acknowledged to be one of the hardest working men in Stretham. He was exempted – but then he had lost left eye years earlier when he was a blacksmith's assistant!

His namesake, 54-year old Albert E. Wright died in London in May 1917. He had two sons in the Battle of the Somme who were killed on 1st July 1916 when a shell exploded, killing them both instantaneously. The news of their death was such a shock to him that it brought on paralysis from which he never recovered.

And still the news came back of village casualties. Heber Hazel wrote: "I am again out in the trenches. Just as we were going after the Germans a shell exploded in front of me and knocked me back in the trench and buried me. Mates with shovels got me out". Corporal Spencer Ambrose was seriously wounded by a shell bursting near him.

By February 1917 the Stretham company of the Volunteer Force were undergoing drill & musketry instruction; it numbered 100 men and when efficient would get a grant from the War Office for the hire of a drill room. They wanted their own rifle range in the village. Meanwhile the new Military Road was becoming overgrown as no traffic was using it. The temporary pontoon bridges had been removed and there was no way over the rivers.

In September 1917 a memorial service was held for two brothers, Lieutenant Russell and Second Lieutenant Jack Wheeler who had once been members of the choir. It was an impressive service, well attended and conducted by the rector. Other lads were also making the final sacrifice – brothers Albert & Frank Baxter were both dead. Percy Beasley was to follow, as was Herbert Swan formerly of the Post Office, his mother had two other sons in the army and one in the Royal Navy. In November the Rev Routledge's youngest son, Ernest, who had joined the army on 26th March and gone to France that June, was killed.

1917 ended with a social evening at the White Hart Inn, Ely, arranged by the Labourers Union. With the present cost of living their wages were not sufficient, it was claimed. But others thought they were having it easy, given the hardships being faced by other families whose men were fighting overseas. One of its organisers was called before the Exemption Tribunal where it was claimed he had not done a week's work since the previous harvest, and always found the job that would pay the biggest penny. No farmer would speak out for him but he was allowed to remain in civilian life. He continued to promote the Union when it formed a new branch at Lt Thetford.

Then in April 1918 came the news that every mother dreaded. Her son was "missing" This time that mother was Mrs Stitt. Some news came back: "I have discovered that Innes was wounded towards the end, but not seriously injured. So we are all hoping that before long we will have news of him from Germany". Their youngest son, George, passed his special entry for the Royal Navy.

In May the Rev Stitt wrote in the Ely Rural Deanery Magazine: "The war is drawing us all together more than anything else could, for so many of us now are knit together by the common fellowship of suffering and anxiety, as well as uplifted with pride in the bravery and devotion of our boys. This month we have to record Innes Stitt, missing (supposed to be wounded), Charles Porter wounded & a prisoner, Charles Asplin in hospital at home, Albert Routledge badly gassed & in hospital at home, Thomas Cross dangerously ill. Mr George Stitt will soon be leaving us for training for the Royal Navy. We hope his loss to us & the parish will be his country's gain"

In August 350 people packed a remembrance service in the church where the shrine in the war corner was covered with beautiful flowers and a second group of photographs of those who died had recently been added.

The rector was attacked in September 1918 for remarks he was said to have made about the labourer's union. One of its supporters claimed "it is disgraceful that churchmen who know the conditions of the labourers and seen their wives and children badly clothed & never lifted a finger, should now come forward to destroy the work of the Union". Stitt replied: "I am far too much interested in the welfare of the labouring man at the front and his wife and dependants at home to care very much about those who remain safely at home & seem to forget there is a war on"

There remained no news of his own son, though his wife Mary, claimed that he had returned to her at the rectory and brought with him two other village lads, brothers who had also been killed.

Then on 11th November 1918 the Great War came to an end & the village prepared for the peace. But it also saw the death of Reginald Acred the first victim of a flu epidemic which left his five sisters and elder brother also seriously ill. [Appendix 16]

War memorial

A committee was formed to raise subscriptions for the erection of a village war memorial. There were three questions – what sort of a memorial, where should it be situated and how should it be paid for. Various suggestions were considered. The village was awarded a 9.2" shell in May 1920 in recognition of its contribution to War Savings and it was placed in the war corner in the church. The Parish council unsuccessfully applied for a Field Gun and rejected the offer of two German machine guns or a trench mortar.

The committee opted for a memorial "of striking appearance, made of rough hewn grey Cornish granite, and of the obelisk type", supplied by E. Wenlock & son of March at a cost of £170. It reflected "the greatest credit for those responsible for it".

The site proved more difficult. The committee wanted the memorial to stand near the junction of Pump Lane and High Street and erected a base for it. The site was vetoed by the Rector, who thought the memorial should stand in the churchyard. This was not acceptable to several of the villagers who felt that some of those who fell were not church lads, they were chapel. An alternative site was sought.

In December 1919 the Parish Council agreed the memorial could be erected in the cemetery and put in hand extensive repairs and renovations to provide a suitable position. In August 1921, as the date for its unveiling neared, heated meetings were held, protesting about the choice of the site and urging it should be placed in a more prominent position in the village. At this meeting the Rector apologised for a "misunderstanding" that had arisen between himself and the Memorial Committee and a deputation was appointed to convey the apology to them. However the Committee stuck to their preferred site and the memorial was unveiled on Armistice Sunday 1921 by the Isle of Ely MP, Captain Colin Coote. "The whole village assembled", with the exception of the Rector, Rev Stitt and Rev Routledge of the Mission Hall who was unable to attend because of illness.

A second War memorial subscription was organised by the Rev Stitt and the Baptist minister. It was unveiled in the churchyard in July 1922, just eight months after the first, and described by the Baptist minister as "the people's memorial". The two memorials still stand.

The 1920s

Following the misery of the Great war it may have been hoped that the future would be bright.

In October 1922 Rev Stitt lectured to the Women's Institute on the history of the village. His notes were printed and remain an important account of our local history. They were reprinted with additions in 1928 to raise money for repairing the spire. Mr A Pope had been in the churchyard when he was startled by a great crash inside the tower of the church and a clanging of bells. On investigation it was discovered that the block of stone used to keep the weathervane steady had broken and crashed on to the oak beams below. They were unable to use the church for two Sundays & the top of the spire had to be rebuilt. [SN65,68,143]

Instead of prosperity the 1920s and 1930s brought a period of hardship & farm bankruptcies. It also saw a major transfer of land when in 1926 Sir Frederick Hiam bought most of the Manorial land from Harry W. Morgan Willis, including Stow Bridge, Berry Green, Tiled House, Fidwell Fen, Railway and Chittering farms in Stretham together with Letter F Farm, Littleport & Oily Hall Farm, Bottisham. Hiam's purchase, at a cost of £40,000 for 1,622 acres, also included the cricket field, land in Hay Close, cottages in Cage Lane and High Street, the site of the Baptist chapel the parish pound. The latter was sold to William Mason for £10. [SN155] [Appendix 17]. The Manor Farm, "Plantation", and other manorial lands passed to Peterhouse, Cambridge.

Road improvements

This period saw an increase in motor traffic and considerable changes in the road structure. The bridge at Stretham Ferry had always been steep with farmers having to put additional horses on their carts to drag heavy loads over it. It was also too narrow for the traffic now using it. In 1925 a new concrete bridge was erected & tested with four traction engines driven two abreast over it. The old bridge was demolished immediately the new one opened.

In 1928 the Military Road to Wicken was finally opened to traffic with the construction of concrete bridges over the Old West & at Dimmock's Cote. It is perhaps symptomatic of the change to road transport that ordinary passenger services ended on Grunty Fen railway line in 1931 [SN65].

There were also major improvements within the village. In 1928 a "fine wide road" was constructed in front of the new council houses, the present Cambridge Road. Previously all traffic had negotiated three blind bends around the recreation ground, the present Short Road.

There were major changes in the High Street where the front of the shop beside the Parish Hall was set back, together with the Rectory wall. The wall of the churchyard, which jutted out into the road near the cross, was also set back to remove a dangerous bend that had caught out several motorists. This involved disturbing several of the graves and proved an attraction for village youngsters. Benzley Wright recalled that they gathered the bones up, put them in bags and reburied them at the back of the church.

One who knew the roads far better than most was the old village carrier, Ted Lowe, who died in 1927. He had been the village's carrier for 65 years, in spite of the disability of having only one hand.

New competition had arrived in the early 1920's when Jabez Parnell joined his father Ted's coal business. He bought a lorry and installed a petrol pump at the front of his house. Before long he got one of the village carpenters to make some seats that could be placed in the lorry to convert it into a motor bus travelling to Ely, Cambridge and St Ives. When this prospered he bought an old London motor bus and soon built up a fleet of buses. He won the contract to take children to Ely High School. He sold the business to the Ortona Motor Company in March 1926.

The lack of maintenance on riverbanks during the War contributed to serious flooding in March 1919. Part of the bank of the Old West River, which was in a rotten state, blew out drowning a large part of the district including the allotments. Parts of the Military road were under water for several months [SB17].

Water supply

Houses collected rainwater in butts or tanks for washing purposes and several properties had their own pumps. There were public pumps at the corner of Pump Lane, on the green at the corner of Top Street and Wood Lane, and opposite the junction of Short Road and Wilburton Road. These were sometimes out of action. By 1919 some people felt that the village was badly in need of a more efficient supply of water, especially at the lower end, but the Parish Council opposed plans by the Rural District Council to institute a piped supply of water.

In 1922 the Rural District announced that it intended to go ahead with a scheme. The Stretham representative voiced his opposition claiming the natural supply was good and ample, though distribution might be improved. However Mr Savidge the baker disagreed. Half the population, he said, used one source of supply and that was subject to contamination from the roads. Whenever it rained the water supply was muddy. "I cannot drink it, nor can I get other people to eat it" he complained, adding "I dare not go to the Parish Council meeting for fear they crucified me, because everybody there was against it. Everybody in Stretham would like good water, but they don't want to pay for it".

In 1925 26 Stretham residents asked to be included in the district water scheme, though the Parish Council were still opposed. It was 1931 before a piped water supply was installed. The pump in Top Street was dismantled in 1934, the one in Pump Lane after December 1948.

In 1935 it was agreed to fill in the Town Pond, (the present Jubilee Gardens) on the corner of High Street & Newmarket Road, & this took place during the next few years.

Housing

The first council houses, on Cambridge road, were ready for occupation in February 1921, though they had no water, which needed to be fetched from a farm 200 yards away. The rest were finished by that October. Houses on Ely Road were erected with others in Read's Street at which time Rose Cottage, an attractive thatched property in Brook Lane was demolished.

A fire caused by a firework in October 1929 gutted two thatched properties in Chapel Street. The fire brigade faced an acute shortage of water & had to connect their hose to the village pond which was very low owing to a drought. Then they were unable to use their pumps at full strength for fear of blocking the hose with mud from the pond. Because of the lack of water a second fire engine could do nothing but watch [ES 10.1929].

Other fires broke out in July 1921 when stacks in High Street belonging to Hugh Searle were got under control "after drying several neighbouring walls" [ES 15.7.1921]. A barn and stackyard on Ely Road caught fire in July 1934 and only prompt action by farmworkers who mowed a large area around the blazing building prevented the flames from spreading to an adjoining wheat field [ES 3.8.1934].

Shops

In June 1920 the Post Office business moved from Swan's stores on the corner of Top Street to the present site, then occupied by Mrs Baylis. Swan's continued as a general stores, with drapery, boots and shoes and other items [FOM p13].

There were changes in the licensed trade. In 1920 the New Red Lion, then owned by Knights brewery was sold to F. Dale [ES 14.4.1920]. The Crown Inn in Read's Street closed in March 1933 [ES 17.3.1933] and two others changed hands with the transfer of the Sun from Henry Partridge to Charles Langford in 1933 and the Red Lion to Albert Blayney in 1936 [SN133]. In 1929 the Stretham Charity Trustees sold the Chequers Inn and butchers shop to Greene King for £900 [SN80].

Sport & recreation

A Stretham Outing Club that had been established before the war was reorganised and had their first road outing to Hunstanton by Parnell's motor conveyance in June 1920 [ES 25.6.1920].

In 1923 A Stretham Social Club was formed. They acquired a wooden ex-army hut (the “Black Hut”) which was erected on the northwestern corner of the Recreation Ground. It offered billiards, table tennis, skittles & newspapers, opened 10am-10pm, & attracted a membership of over 60 people, making it one of the most successful ventures ever started in the village. The village’s MP, James de Rothschild, presented a new cup for billiards. Within a few years “misunderstandings” arose and membership declined but the club continued up to the start of the Second World War [SN21].

Recreation Ground

In March 1926 the Parish Council purchased the recreation ground they had previously rented, from its new owner Sir Fred Hiam, for £500. It provided a venue for various events.

Commander George Stitt, the Rector’s son, had organised a sports day on the rectory lawn in 1926. It included a Marathon road race from Stretham to Lt Thetford and back. This proved so popular that the next year it transferred to the recreation ground, the Marathon being run as twelve laps of the field. Cycle races started and part of the ground was levelled for a cycle track. The sports developed into a major event attracting professional competitors for money prizes. The sports day included a flower show held in the Black Hut with prizes for vegetables, fruit and flowers [FOM].

Meetings were held between the football and cricket clubs in 1931 to agree the starting dates of their respective seasons. Cricket was to run from 1st April to 31st August, though uncompleted football matches could be played until the 2nd Saturday in April. The field was grazed by Mr Parish’s cows, which provided an additional hazard for players to watch out for. A major refurbishment of the field, ploughing, levelling and reseeding took place in 1939.

The tennis club was allowed to enclose a rood of land in 1927, and a bowls club granted an area for a green in 1935. A pavilion was erected and the club opened in 1937.

Children’s play equipment was erected in commemoration of the Jubilee of King George V in 1935.

The Feast amusements which had traditionally stood down the High Street from the Cross to the Sun Corner were moved to the recreation ground in 1928, fees from the stalls being used to repair the ground after use. The feast parades were now an established part of village life. There was no parade in 1933 but it was revived the following year when the Haddenham Foresters’ Band was followed by a decorated van depicting a tableau of nursing and a number of children on decorated bicycles. There was an open-air service on the recreation ground where a collection was taken for Addenbrooke’s Hospital.

Nursing Association

A Nursing Association was formed when some of the ladies of the village got together in 1929 to discuss the possibility of having a District Nurse. The first appointment was Nurse Nation who with her friend, Miss Young, set up home together in a small ranch-type house in an acre of ground in Short Road. She resigned in 1932 and other nurses followed. During 1934 the nurse made 4,838 visits and was supplied with a new bicycle. People subscribed to the service. In 1936 5/- a year would cover parents and children up to 16 years, a single person living at home was 2/-. The maternity fee was 10/-, midwifery £1. One nurse refused to accept the post in 1937 because of the lack of sanitation and modern conveniences in the nurse’s house and in January Nurse H. Cook was appointed. She stayed for 27 years. [FOM p95]

The end of 1937 saw a crisis within the organising committee and all officers resigned. At a meeting chaired by the County Medical Officer and with the Clerk of the County Council reading the minutes members of the old executive were voted out and a new committee was formed. With the coming of the Welfare State the local Nursing Association ceased to exist and Nurse Cook was employed by the County Council.

Wesley’s

March 1925 saw the death of John Wesley, engineer. He had been born in Stretham 1853 and lived all his life in the village. He’d been educated in the village school and had a strong connection with the Wesleyan

church, was a JP, chairman of the Parish council, school manager and charity trustee. He also had the first car in Stretham. He carried on his engineering business for over 40 years until he retired in 1923 due to failing health [WS 20.3 1925].

Wesley's works, called Grove Works, were at the junction of Green End and Newmarket Road in a big yard surrounded by buildings. It provided work for 30 men during the winter & they had been allowed to keep workers during the Great War. They had several steam ploughing & threshing engines, each driven by a regular team of workers, which would go around the area. They had their own blacksmith's shop, repairing broken engines and employed a carpenter to maintain the wooden machinery. It had its own mill, worked by machinery. In another part of the complex they manufactured metal skewers. Rusty wire was fetched from the station in two coils, processed and tinned until it was bright, then twisted before being boxed for export & despatched from the railway station. All of this needed efficient office and accounting procedures. The machinery was sold up in a seven-day sale with the equipment displayed on the recreation ground, [FOM SN1,SN17 SB34]

In December 1932 a large memorial was placed in the churchyard in memory of the family of Emma Eliza Wesley, formerly Grainger. There was also a new glass window in the church, & picture postcards of it were produced. But with no rich patron the church was experiencing financial difficulties & in 1933 the rector initiated a church heating scheme [SN143].

Looking back in 1935 Stitt wrote: "we have lost a whole generation of those who would now be able to ease our burdens; people are apt to forget about war and its legacy of broken health, broken minds & broken fortunes" [ERDM 6.35].

The rector himself had a nervous breakdown in 1936 & experienced two years of difficulties caused by "serious private trouble & anxiety but also because our most valued helpers have their own domestic strain" [ERDM July 1938].

Meanwhile the Baptist congregation laid the foundation stone for a large new chapel in 1935. That year electricity cables were laid [ES 4.1.35] and in 1938 a telephone kiosk was erected [SN133].

In March 1937 serious flooding devastated the fens. Although Stretham was fortunate in escaping the worst of the damage water flooded across the A10 at Chittering and Mr Ruane and Mr S. Smith organised gangs of men who fought successfully to prevent a breach in the bank of the Old West River near Wilburton. Elsewhere banks burst in various places and thousands of acres of land went under water. Two years later, in February 1939, the situation was repeated as the floods came back.

Meanwhile farming was in crisis, with numerous men unemployed and desperate to find any work that was available. The situation was only eased with the declaration of the Second World War.

1939-45 War

Neville Chamberlain's announcement that it was to be "Peace in Our Time" was celebrated at a special service in the parish church. It was unfortunate that a threatened thunderstorm kept people away from an evening service of prayer, but it passed over and was taken as a sign that war clouds over Europe were also passing away. But throughout the winter of 1938-39 lectures were given on Air Raid Precautions.

Plans had been laid for evacuated London children, should war come. They arrived in September 1939 when 146 Jewish children from the Robert Montefiore School in East London were billeted in homes despite reservations of village people. Other evacuees arrived separately to stay with relatives. More came in summer 1940 and others during the London blitz. Some returned home, unable to settle in the countryside. At the start of war the Infants' School shared its premises with the younger children but later the Methodist Church Schoolroom was requisitioned. The Junior School became crowded with additional pupils as well as evacuees. On Saturday the school was used as a Synagogue. Some of the children remained with the teacher Mrs Frances Levi & Head Mrs C.R. Barnett until May 1945.

Whist drives and dances in the Infants' School together with WEA classes helped to keep up morale. A social centre for evacuated mothers, both Jewish and others who had fled the blitz, was set up in the Parish Room which was properly blacked out to give the young people somewhere to go in the evenings.

It proved impossible to black out the church & the Rev Stitt found it very difficult to fit in services in the few hours available. He also complained of the war restrictions and regulations which, with the presence of evacuees, disturbed the even tenor of our ways, & that the many patriotic war activities in which most people were engaged made regular church activities difficult.

These included a range of organisations. A St John Ambulance Brigade was formed with Mrs Dorothy Clark of the Post Office as its Superintendent & meetings were held in a room behind the house. In October 1942 they took part in a major disaster exercise, when the Methodist chapel served as an emergency hospital.

The Royal Observer Corps made their headquarters at the windmill, Ely Road, removing the sails. They worked on a rota basis 24 hours a day keeping watch on aircraft movements such as on 14th November 1940 when hundreds of enemy bombers passed over en route to Coventry.

A village Home Guard platoon was formed from reserved farm labourers, young men waiting to be called up and older residents. Jack Cockerton became its Lieutenant. They were based at the Black Hut where they undertook training under a regular army organiser. They mounted guard & watched out for German parachutists. Regular soldiers were billeted in the village for a short time.

An Auxiliary Fire Service was established with Harold Ellwood in charge, two men being on duty each night. A Coventry Climax motor pump was kept in a garage behind Oakley House. The men had regular drill and pumped out the pond in Brook Lane. They fought fires at a cottage in Wilburton Road, at Akeman House & Red Hill, and in a thatched barn in Bertram Parish's farmyard, which threatened the Infants School. None were caused by enemy action. They also attended two plane crashes, one of a Lancaster that crashed in Mill Drove and another when a Mosquito crashed at Chittering. One man baled out and came down at Stowbridge Farm, but the other was killed in the burning wreckage.

Air Raid Wardens were appointed, with Len Routledge as Head Warden. They learned how to deal with incendiary bombs, & the Parish Council bought two stirrup pumps. Gas masks were been issued and demonstrations were given on how to deal with gas or incendiary bombs. When enemy planes approached the area the Head Warden received a phone call from Ely and wardens cycled round the village blowing shrill blasts on a whistle to warn of a raid, later ringing a bell to denote the all clear. Air raid shelters of brick construction, coated with pitch, were provided at the school in March 1941.

Bombs were dropped in the vicinity of the village, at Red Hill on the night of 25th-26th August 1940, at Grange Farm on 20th September & Box Farm on October 6th 1940 but caused no casualties.

Feast Day was suspended for the first two years of the war but resumed in 1942 when members of the Defence Services, Home Guard, Firemen, ARP, Royal Observer Corps & nurses paraded the village headed by an ATS band, though owing to Home Guard operations their band was unable to play in the evening. In 1944 the only celebrations were a cricket match between members of the Home Guard & Fire Service was held.

Farming was now of vital importance. The Grunty fen allotments were ploughed under the War Agricultural Executive who also pressed for improved drainage, but this would cost £40,000 & Grunty Fen land was only worth £15 per acre. The Top School closed for two weeks in October 1941 so pupils could help the beet and potato harvest; though the infants and evacuee school remained open. In 1942 the Stretham farm group of the Hiam's estate comprised 1378 acres under Sid Harley.

Household scraps were saved for animal food & a scrap metal dump set up in field adjacent to Mill House, Ely Road.

All-vegetable pies were distributed by members of the Women's Institute from Grove House where an outdoor building was turned into a temporary shop. 60 people enrolled for the scheme in June 1942. A jam

centre at Grove House made 100lb of gooseberry jam & a canning machine was set up in the Rectory to assist in the preserving of food. Food parcels from America & Australia eked out the increasing hardship of rationing. With all petrol supplies centralised at a garage in Ely cars were laid up for the duration and some farmers returned to their pony and traps.

Fund raising took place for weapons or the welfare of servicemen. In 1941 £12,562 was raised for war weapons week but in April 1943 only a few people attended a Wings for Victory meeting when it was decided to try and raise £8,000 for a Beaufighter.

Army convoys were seen in village streets & Harriet Wheeler, the wife of the headmaster, was killed when she was knocked down by army dispatch rider in October 1941.

The Rector summarised his thoughts in the Ely Deanery Magazine. August 1940: "I feel the village is beginning to pull more together, that the faithful few are pulling their weight more than ever, that plausible time servers are being found out". September 1940: "We are living from day to day at present, so it is difficult to plan ahead except to look forward with faith and expectancy to Victory Thanksgiving". March 1941: "Church attendance is extremely depressing ... we must make allowance for the inconvenient hour and the crowding of services, some people are sick, many away". By April 1941 he comments on "the gradual denudation of the parish of our young people, especially the young men. There are already 64 names on the intercession list for those who have joined forces and those left have to do double duty. It is a heavy burden on women to attend to the sick and aged but also to take care of other people's children evacuated from bombed regions". That September he recorded the village had supplied nearly all its active young people to help in the Great Cause.

They included Leading Seaman William "Billy" Goad who went over the side of his ship into freezing, heavy seas to rescue an unconscious man and was awarded the Albert Medal for his heroism & WAAF Flt-Sgt Emily Norman who prepared herring roes to cure blindness. Lieut-Commander George Stitt published a book "HMS Wideawake" in 1943 describing his war-time activity at sea.

Village life, and death, continued. Headmaster George Bridgeman retired in 1944 after 24 years at Stretham and was succeeded by R.E.Poole. H.W.Harris, who with his father had kept a general stores for 30 years, died in May 1943.

In April 1944 Rev Stitt officiated at another funeral service, this one for his wife, 'a much-loved personality, a lady of gracious charm with a sympathetic understanding for those in need of comfort, her visits to homes in the village will be greatly missed'.

Meanwhile others in the village were agonising over the fate of their husbands or brothers, men of the Cambridgeshire Regiment who had taken part in the last defence of Singapore and then disappeared into the jungles as prisoners of the Japanese. The Rector, to aid their suffering, published his wife's account of her reunion with their son who had been posted as "missing" in the First World War, and whose body had never been found.

Although the war was far from over Homecoming Funds were being established at the Chequers, Red Lion & Sun, though squabbles broke out between them. When Victory in Europe finally came there were celebrations in the streets which were decorated with Union Jacks & streamers, flags and bunting. There were thanksgiving services in the churches & a huge bonfire was erected on the recreation ground, topped with an effigy of Hitler & set ablaze.

VJ – the final victory against Japan, saw more bunting and flags with a number of strange banners from the rectory. One read "Malaria abroad", & there were several similar flags brought home from India long ago by the Rector. Church bells rang. But with several men in Japanese hands hopes were tinged with anxiety.

Private William Hobbs came home to find Cambridge Road bedecked with flags. His family had received only one letter that he'd written in January 1944. It had not been received until April 1945; he'd spent 2½ years working on the Siam railway.

Many did not come home, including Private John Wesley who went missing in September 1944 following the sinking of a Japanese transport ship carrying prisoners of war. The news was not received until December 1945.

Those who did come home found a familiar figure absent. The Reverend Stewart Stitt died in August 1945. Described as “a brilliant man with great literary ability” he was buried in the chancel of the church where he had ministered for nearly 50 turbulent years.

For a fuller account of the war read “Stretham wartime memories 1939-1945 of home and abroad” by Beatrice C. Stevens, 1995

1945-1952 John Edward Cowgill

Rev Cowgill was inducted in November 1945. A charming and persuasive man his first project was to restore the rood screen in the church and erect memorial gates at the entrance to the chancel with the names of those who had died in the Second World War. Electric light was installed in both the church and parish room and in 1949 a brass chandelier purchased at a sale at Babraham Hall was placed in chancel. At the same time an oak table was placed in the War Memorial corner; and the Rector donated a painting of the Madonna. In 1950 the war corner was refurbished and a book of remembrance instituted. The church bells were sent for recasting and returned in Easter 1952. [SN132]

In February 1946 a start had been made on restoring the churchyard from what Rev Cowgill, a keen gardener, described as its disgraceful condition.

The Stretham village produce association reformed so that gardeners could pool their resources and keep down costs by bulk-buying seeds and fertiliser. This attracted wide attention and in 1948 the BBC travelled to the Black Hut to broadcast an interview with its members.

Out in Grunty Fen the allotments were not used and were of little value, while shrinkage of the soil in the Waterbeach Level forced the Internal Drainage Board to install two new pumping engines to discharge water into the River Cam.

In March 1947 fenland was threatened with severe flooding following heavy snow and a quick thaw. Rivers rose dangerously and banks burst in various places. A major breach in the Gt Ouse barrier bank occurred opposite Earith with water spreading across Haddenham and Wilburton fens, crossing the Twentypence Road and forcing the closure of the A10 road at Chittering. Another breach at Lt Thetford fed water across the fen to flood across the Newmarket Road and swamp the allotments. 2,000 acres in Stretham and Thetford were affected and the diesel engine ran 354 hours continuously [SB50].

Developments after the flood saw major investment in new sluices at Denver and at Earith which have reduced the amount of water carried by the Old West River past Stretham. In 1950 the Chear Fen pumping station was equipped with two new diesel engines. The station had been first opened in 1842 with a steam beam engine driving a paddle wheel that was run during the 1947 floods and dismantled in 1949. A new engine house with a Blackstone diesel engine had been opened in 1926.

Within Stretham the village pump was felt to be of no further use, and a decision was made in 1948 for it to be filled in. In 1949 the RDC installed a sewage system. [SN133]

Ely Rural District Council's proposals to erect council housing off Wood Lane were opposed by the Parish Council in 1946, who suggested Brook Lane as a better site, and wrote to the Government protesting about the plans. But they went ahead and the village gained a major addition to its population, the name Berry Green being agreed in 1952. The Isle of Ely County Development Plan of 1951 reported proposals for a new village school to accommodate 85 pupils in three classes, it would be built before 1960. It wasn't. The report also identified a number of buildings of special architectural interest, including Orchard House, the Rectory, the Cross and the almshouses in Red Lion Street.

But in 1950 several streets had been renamed: Pond Street & Military Road became Newmarket Road; Red Lion Street & Chapel Square was now to be called Chapel Street; Short Lane became Short Road & Brook Street changed to Brook Lane [SN133].

In 1952 a giant Pliosaur was discovered during excavation of the Kimeridge Clay by the Great Ouse River Board and largely due to the voluntary efforts of their employees, in particular Mr W.W. Wolfe & Mr B. Woolf, the huge skeleton was preserved for the Sedgwick Museum in Cambridge. After museum staff had removed what they wanted the River Board allowed local schools and private collectors to have the remainder but when in 1956 it was realised that this was a new type of pliosaur an appeal was made for other fossils to be donated. Cambridge University staff visited the village school to ask, "Can we have our bones back please". Various villagers donated their souvenirs, other pieces still survive in private hands. Because of the significance of the find it was named "Stretosaurus" after the village [SB5].

1952-1955 George W. Loughborough

The Rev Loughborough is remembered as a very academic man, from Canterbury, whose sermons could be above the head of his congregation. He restarted the choir which attracted so many members that new surplices had to be bought.

The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 was commemorated by the planting of trees around the Recreation Ground by schoolchildren. A branch of the Mothers Union was launched that autumn.

In 1954 the Parish Council discussed the preservation of old cottages in Read's Street and Brook Lane but some felt that such old buildings would be better demolished. The lower part of Read's Street was dominated by ancient stone-built, thatched houses which were by then in a considerable state of decay and were demolished throughout the decade.

Meanwhile construction was under way at a second council housing estate, Berry Close [SN133].

There was excitement in May 1954 when a Swift jet plane crashed near houses on the Chittering Farm estate, Stretham fen. [CDN 14.5.54 p9]

1955-1966 Dennis Foulds

On his appointment the Rev Foulds was told by his predecessor: "Stretham may not be the most beautiful place in England, but they are a great crowd" [CN 5.7.66]. During his ministry social life in the village was enhanced by the start of an Over Sixties Club in 1955 and the building up of a flourishing youth club which met in the small Parish Room. The club was one of the first to experience the new Parish Room which opened in 1961 at a cost of £2,562. It was radically larger but lacked the atmosphere of the old hall, which now housed a new kitchen and toilets. A cub group was formed for younger residents in 1963.

Youngsters were getting used to other changes, with Alex Blackmore promoted to be head of the village school from 1956. He was succeeded in 1961 by J.A. Willsdon who continued till 1968. Many families were sad when in April 1960 Dr J.W. Chalmers Fairweather retired after 22 years tending to the sick from the home of the Misses Acred in High Street, as his predecessor Dr C.W. Howe had done since 1914. Dr Richard Wolfendale succeeded him.

There was a change at the Baptist chapel in 1958 with the appointment of Brian Westrep as Baptist minister [SN65]. That year also saw the retirement of village blacksmiths, Lowe & Crow after more than 50 years. They had served their apprenticeships with Hudson & Son who had formerly run the smithy in Chapel Street [SN65]. The site was taken over by Alf Hemmings who turned it into the Smithy Garage and became landlord of The Chequers in 1961. 1962 saw Geoffrey Carter take over the Post Office from Geoffrey Clark who had been there 30 years and next year Lilian Pikett gave up her shop in Chapel Street, though its metal sign advertising postage stamps continued to be displayed on the wall.

Another familiar figure retired when William (Bill) Lythell hung up his policeman's helmet. He had been called up as a War reserve policeman and served as village Bobby until his retirement, when he continued to

lead the Feast parade as he had when on duty. The Parish Council asked for another constable to replace him in 1964, but it was not to be. His work would have been made easier when the incessant traffic through the village was relieved with the construction of a bypass in 1964. The relative peace of the village was captured by a Cambridge News photographer that December.

Television cameras arrived in the village in 1958 when the work of the newly established Stretham Engine Preservation Trust was featured. The Trust continues to care for the old pumping station undertaking renovations and restorations.

By 1962 the Rev Foulds had 110 people on the church electoral roll. In 1966 he was presented with a tape recorder when he left to take up a new parish in Littleport, where he ministered until 1973. He was appointed an honorary Canon of Ely cathedral the following year and died in 1988.

1966-1974 John Hulme Hornby

The Rev. John Hornby was inducted in 1966, having been previously rector in five south Cambridgeshire parishes for seven years. It was to prove a turbulent period in church and village life.

Within three years, five members of the church council resigned over the “dictatorship of the rector” and nine others did not stand for re-election. A church membership campaign was started and members of the Methodist & Church of England met for Holy Communion in the Methodist church, for the first time in March 1969. Other initiatives such as Bingo sessions were organised to aid funds & a Harvest Festival was held in the Chequers in October 1969. By 1972 the church electoral roll had dropped to 32 [PCC] & the churchyard which had previously been maintained by volunteers from the congregation was formally handed to the Parish Council to care for [ES 1.4.71]. The Rev. Hornby left in April 1974 for new congregations in Devon.

Meanwhile the village was undergoing considerable growth with the building of bungalows in Akeman Close (1966) and Fieldside (1969), though plans for the largest housing estate, at Meadowcroft met considerable opposition from the Parish Council before being approved in 1971.

There was controversy also in 1972 when the Baptist Chapel complained of the disruption of its services caused by L.A. Jackson (Lewmac), a civil engineering contractor who had moved into the area beside the chapel which had been developed as a transport yard by Prime Godfrey. County planners refused plans for an extension and the firm moved from the village in 1973.

More discussion was stimulated by the decision by the Charity Trustees in 1966 to sell the almshouses in Chapel Street. These buildings, which had originally been a schoolroom were by now in poor condition and the site had been valued in 1962 at £250 [SN80]. The building was made into a private house, and later converted to its present use as the doctors’ surgery. The Trustees used the income in 1970 to modernise their cottages in Top Street. In another change the Charity stopped distributing school attendance money in 1968, and a quaint custom when schoolchildren would queue to receive a few pence from the chairman of the trustees passed into history [ES 1.2.68].

Other things passing into history were Joseph Garner’s butcher’s shop in High Street which was sold in 1967 when he retired due to ill health; he died in January 1968 [ES 24.8.67 CIP 12.1.68]. The old shop was incorporated into Eric Wright’s coal business. At the Red Lion Albert Blayney left in 1967 & was succeeded by Ted Langford. Meanwhile Leslie Dyer who was making a success of his ferret and rabbit breeding enterprises in Brook Lane was featured in the Cambridge News in February 1968. Gravel & Dimmock’s Cote farms established by S.R. Hopkin were bought by Guy Shropshire in September 1968 for the record price of £435 an acre [CN 13.9.68]. That year the village’s largest property, Orchard House, was for sale at £15,500 [CN 31.12.68]

Other changes the departure of Brian Westrep, the Baptist pastor after 11 years in the village, Bruce Sinden was inducted as his successor in January 1970 [ES 15.1.70]. Trevor Williams was appointed head teacher in succession to John Willson in January 1969 & the school acquired its first swimming pool, lent by the Manor School, Wilburton, while changes took place there. A Playgroup started in the Methodist schoolroom

[CN 11.1.69], a Brownie pack was formed with Mrs Ingram & Mrs P. Regan in charge [CIP 4.2.71] & the thriving Youth Club under the leadership of Alan Ingle was featured in the Ely Standard [ES 18.11.71].

Two much-loved village people ceased to ply their trade within a year of each other. Geoff Beasley the village milkman, with his horse-drawn milk-cart, retired in November 1971 and was followed in November 1972 by baker's roundsman, Horace Taylor.

In 1968 Stretham itself made the headlines when it won the Best Kept Village competition, the commemorative sign being unveiled in the August 1968. Amenities were enhanced with the provision of bus shelters; one by the Rectory wall being funded by money from the Village Memorial Hall Committee, [SN133] and another beside Red Lion was paid for by members of the Hazel family.

The problems of maintaining the quality of life was exacerbated by a plague of crickets which were said to come from the refuse tip on Newmarket Rd [CIP 18.8.67] and by loss of Mr Adna Sennitt who until 1968 had been the village's full-time roadsweeper, but was now to be shared with other villages [CN 28.2.69].

In 1970 John Acred retired as Parish clerk after 28 years & was succeeded by Brian Routledge [ES 28.5.70 ES 16.7.70] who was to be followed in that post by Brian Dunn and John Morley.

By 1971 the Parish Council had started to grapple with what was to become a long-running saga when houses beside the roundabout were flooded. It was to continue to cause problems for nearly 15 years until larger pipes were laid under the bypass and in a ditch behind a house further downstream [CEN 21.6.84].

Another continuing problem was the incessant demand for additional housing. In 1971 came the prediction that the village population might shortly increase by 25%. As local government reorganisation neared, which would transfer planning responsibilities from the County Council to newly-established District Councils, so village plans were prepared.

In 1973 the draft village plan was published. Stretham's facilities included a school, Baptist & Methodist churches. We had a range of shops with a Post Office, two general stores, butcher, confectioner/café, Jack Edward's electrical goods, an antiques business, turf accountant, two petrol filling stations, two garages, two public houses and Eric Wright's coal business which then operated 13 coal lorries from their yard in the centre of the village. Facilities increased when L.C. & R Holliday's shop, or "Swan's" as it continued to be known to older residents, was granted an off-licence that August.

The school was on two sites with a total roll of 88 pupils though this was expected to rise to about 100. A new school was being planned with a capacity of 140-180 but was unlikely to be started before 1976.

The agricultural basis of employment was becoming eroded and other commercial concerns were not labour intensive (grain merchants, hauliers, plant hire, coal merchant etc).

Since the bypass had taken most of the through traffic the High Street had almost become a traffic-free precinct, although the A1123 had in recent years been increasingly used by heavy traffic from the Midlands to the East Coast ports. The section around the allotments would need improvement sometime in the future.

The village population of 1,000 was expected to rise to 1,460 by 1981. To cope with this expansion two new main residential areas were earmarked: between Short Road and Green End & part of the land north of Berry Close owned by the District Council.

One of those new houses was to be converted from the old windmill which was placed on the market in Spring 1973, having stood disused for many years. One unusual feature it had acquired was an underground bunker.

1974 - 1993 John Stuart Askey

John Askey had been curate at the Good Shepherd church, Arbury for 18 months when he was inducted to Stretham in 1974. He found a small congregation with significant problems; no quota had been paid to the

Diocese for the previous year [PCC]. As well as rebuilding the congregation he had to attend to the continuing renovation problems with the boiler and church fabric. A church tower campaign was launched in 1979, repairs were initiated and the church clock face repainted and gilded in 1981. Cruelly in 1992 a gale ripped off half of the church clock face, damaging the roof as it fell. No sooner had this been repaired than another campaign of restoration started, this time for the church spire that was wreathed in scaffolding as work was undertaken. It was completed by October 1994.

At the same time ambitious plans were promoted for the conversion of the Rectory. The stable block as an ecumenical centre with the barn chapel being dedicated in 1982. The south wing of the rectory became the St Anthony centre in the rectory south wing; and plans for the use of the building as a youth centre were promoted. Rev Askey was appointed the Diocesan officer for youth in 1980.

In 1988 the Rector announced that he would be moving out of the rectory to a new house in Lt Thetford, having previously conducted services of exorcism both there and in part of the church itself. In June 1989 the last church fete was held in the Rectory garden, and a traditional part of village life came to an end.

The Diocese proposed various plans for the property, including its conversion to a youth centre with a new parsonage and other houses in the grounds, but each met opposition and fell through. The Rectory itself was boarded up and vandalised.

Then in July 1993 the Rector left Stretham for a new parish at Brinkley. It marked a low point in the village's history.

Meanwhile other congregations had experienced celebrations and sadness. In 1985 the Methodist chapel celebrated the centenary of its building, with a history written by Mrs Beatrice Stevens. Two years later a dwindling congregation could no longer maintain the expense of such a large structure; they moved their services to the new school, and the chapel was sold. It has since been converted to a design studio and home, retaining several of the features of the former building.

The school by contrast had a period of expansion. With increasing numbers on the two sites in High Street conditions were becoming difficult. In 1976 came the announcement of a new building. It was formally opened by the Chairman of the Managers, Mrs B.C. Stevens in June 1978, its entrance gate being dedicated to the memory of Miss Sarah Kitson, former head of the Infants school. The school continued to thrive under the guidance of its head, Trevor Williams and his deputy Eileen Jakes until they retired in 1984. The new head teacher, Cliff Knight introduced new ideas and enthusiasms; within a year increasing pupil numbers saw the school desperate for Mobile classrooms, which were duly built. When he, like John Askey, left the village in July 1993 a chapter in the life of the school closed and his former deputy, Edris Tildersley started another. Her success was marked by a glowing OFSTED report in 1996.

The old school buildings have been converted to other uses. Proposals for a community hall in the former Infant's school were rejected in 1977 but it has become the headquarters for the youth club and playgroup. The former school canteen was acquired by the Royal British Legion as their headquarters in 1980 and the old "Wooden Hut" demolished. The Parish Council bought the grass playground, once the site of the village pond for a Jubilee Garden at a cost of £50. It was opened in September 1980.

The junior school meanwhile, in the heart of the village, was converted in 1980 into the Spaceward recording studios, attracting various top-name musicians until 1987 when it closed and became part of Spaceward Microsystems Video Graphics. It was purchased by Sadie – Studio Audio & Video Ltd – in 1991 by which time the building had become neglected. As the business prospered they have invested money in restoring and extending the building, winning a top Cambridgeshire conservation award and greatly enhancing the village.

A successful school is a valuable asset to a community and this period saw considerable growth. Plans for a large development off Green End had been promoted in 1973 but met with opposition. They were finally agreed in 1976 when Jonathan Boyd produced proposals for the whole site. The names King Cob and The Grove were chosen in 1979. The old barns of the former Wesley works were demolished for a development of houses of advanced architectural design, while further along Green End a development of large properties grew up, bit by bit, just beyond what had been thought to be the agreed stop lines on the village plan.

The “Wooden Bridge” which carries the road across the Old West River was by 1976 so rotten that it was closed to motor vehicles for two years. It was repaired and then rebuilt completely in 1994 as part of an EEC directive. At the same time the bridge on the Newmarket Road was replaced and the one at Dimmock’s Cote strengthened.

In 1977 Stretham Old Engine was renovated by Eastern Electricity apprentices [CIP 30.6.77]. A new Stretham Engine Trust was formed in 1988 and major repairs and improvements carried out, including the installation of an electric drive to turn the engine and scoop wheel. Though no longer a working pump this initiative has enabled visitors to appreciate the important part the engine played in the drainage of the Waterbeach Level.

In 1979 new electric pumps were installed at Dimmock’s Cote and others have been erected at various places, performing a similar function to that originally undertaken by wind pumps [CEN 31.10.79] & bringing the Level into the late twentieth century. The Internal Drainage Boards have two functions, to get the water off the land in wet weather, but to ensure that there is sufficient water in the drains to irrigate the crops during the growing season. In recent years farmers have been discouraged from abstracting water from the rivers and many of them have now started to construct reservoirs by embanking and flooding areas of their land to give themselves a source of water. Thus having spent thousands of pounds draining the fens, they are now having to spend thousands of pounds flooding it again. Stretham is one of the driest places in the country and has one of the largest reservoirs off the Newmarket Road.

In 1989 the Hiam estate, which farmed much of the land south of the river was sold and the trust wound up. [CEN 11.5.89]. Elsewhere farming has adapted to changing circumstances. Fewer people are now employed on the land and the farming presence within the village itself has largely disappeared.

A farmyard at the corner of Top Street and Wood Lane was selected as the site for warden-controlled sheltered housing. The first tenants started moving in December 1975 and it was opened in 1976 by Marion and Archie Hazel, after whom Hazel Court was named. New tenants found the noise of Routledge & Goad’s old-established grain merchant’s business on the other side of Top Street disturbing. The business relocated to new premises adjacent to Hill Farm on the Ely Road and the old site was redeveloped as housing by Barry Elsdon.

More development saw houses erected in the former farmyard in High Street and St James’ Close was built where once Cyril Parish had kept his pigs. The former White Lion public house alongside was restored by Gareth Adamson and his wife Jean. Starter homes were built in Chapel Lane, where Alfred Routledge’s carpenter’s had given way to antiques. And to the North of Berry Close a new housing estate, The Crofters won an electricity energy efficiency award in 1986 and were matched with further building in Akeman Close.

All the new development could not safeguard village facilities. The long-established grocers shop, formerly Swans, run by Lewis & Ruth Holliday on the corner of High Street and Top Street was nominated for an award by its customers in 1982 but closed in 1990. Its trade had been affected by the opening five years earlier of another, short-lived grocery shop in the redeveloped electrician’s premises opposite the Parish Hall. In 1986 Geoffrey Carter left the Post Office after 24 years and the business is continued by his son.

George “Pudden” Dimock who died in 1986, used to be a familiar sight dozing outside his former hairdresser’s shop in High Street, later selling an amazing mixture of bric-a-brac and jumble and retaining is reputation as a debating shop. It has subsequently been demolished and rebuilt as a garage. Gerald Stubbins retired from the Central Garage, on the corner of Pump Lane about 1977, and the premises were redeveloped for housing. He died in 1983. The Crossways Garage continued until 1995, later becoming a second-hand car sales area, leaving just Herbert Ideson’s garage in Cambridge Road as the surviving petrol station within the village.

On the A10 Cambridge Road John and June Tester took over the former Black & White café and in 1975 were included in Egon Ronay Transport Café Guide. Despite rebuilding and extending the business closed and in 1988 a new AJs restaurant opened with a large filling station alongside [ES 11.4.88].

Beside the river the Royal Oak public house was run by Bill & Joyce Burgess until their retirement in 1981 when it was taken by Bill Morgan. The building of a new bridge and new section of the main road had removed much of the passing trade. The Royal Oak was sold in 1986, was rebuilt & renamed The Lazy Otter the following year. Its large conservatory overlooks the Old West River with its moorings, while its front windows look across to a boat yard.

Alf Hemmings, the landlord of the Chequers & proprietor of the Smithy Garage died in 1979. His widow Dulcie continued to run the pub until 1988, when it closed. It was sold in 1990 and converted into a private house, with two new properties built in the former yard.

In 1988 Ted Langford retired as landlord of the Red Lion after 21 years, continuing the family's connection with the licensing trade, having been born in the White Lion & lived at the Sun, which was kept by both his grandfather & father. The pub continued for a while, but then seemed likely to close forever. It was bought in 1992 by David Jenkins and completely redesigned, with a large new conservatory, and reopened with an emphasis on its food.

More food is available from the fish and chip shop on Newmarket Road, which stands on the site of an earlier chip shop and transport café, run by Mr & Mrs Dyos, which was sold in 1979.

Medical facilities within the village have been enhanced with the opening of a doctors' consulting room in Chapel Street; until the retirement of Dr Richard Wolfendale in 1987 doctors had used the front room of the Misses Acred's house in High Street [CWN 9.7.87]. In 1975 a dental surgery was constructed at The Elms, Short Road, though this is no longer used as such [CEN 19.2.75]. For a while the building was the base for a book distribution depot. In 1977 Terry & Joan Ridler established a cottage industry, Wren Toys, from their home in Meadowcroft [CEN 28.12.77].

In 1978 'Fenprobe', a talking news service for the blind was launched by Tony May from another address in that estate [ES 13.7.78]. The playgroup continues to function and the Windmill Day Nursery was opened in 1992 and run by Christine Rudnicki for a number of years before she concentrated her business at her nursery in Ely.

In 1975 a mothers' action group, under its secretary Julie Impey, campaigned for the establishment of a new play area on the former Ely Road pond site. Facilities on the recreation ground have been improved, with an extension to the Bowls Club opened in 1974 by members of the Hazel family & a new pavilion in 1986. Proposals for a new sports pavilion and all-weather play surface funded by East Cambridgeshire District Council provoked considerable disagreements and discussions before being established.

Even more controversy surrounded plans for a new settlement to the south of the village, which were announced at Christmas 1986. They were promoted as an answer to the continuing demand for additional housing, and were supported by local politicians & planning officials. The parish councils of Stretham and Wilburton voiced the only opposition to the plans on behalf of virtually all the villagers. In 1988 Consortium Developments, a partnership of major housing developers announced plans for a smaller settlement and details of "Westmere" were unveiled at Christmas 1988 [SB21]. Despite constant lobbying the revised County Structure Plan of 1989 still advocated the scheme. Matters came to a head in 1991 when three separate proposals were considered at a major planning enquiry at Ely, where members of the Wilburton & Stretham Parish Councils combined to present their case alongside highly-paid barristers and experts retained by the Development Companies. The Inspector's report supported the Parish Councils' case and rejected the Westmere proposals. The battle against the big bad developer was taken as the basis of the village pantomime, but in truth had been no laughing matter, involving a number of people in a very great deal of time and effort.

In 1993 the Westmere plan resurfaced though by now it was opposed by East Cambridgeshire District Council, who had formerly supported it; it will doubtless come up again and again as the demand for homes continues to rise.

The East Cambridgeshire district plan, published in 1993, reported the decline in village services, despite increased residents and proposed only small groups of additional housing. It commented on the neglected

state of the High Street, where various properties were standing vacant & promised that an environmental improvement scheme would be brought forward. Meanwhile traffic continued to be a concern. The Government had plans for the dualling of the A10, but this would be unacceptable as far as Cambridge Road was concerned, and the new route would need to be realigned further west of the village. The Council would also support plans for the re-classification of the A1123 as a B-road, allowing for weight restrictions or traffic calming measures.

1993-2000 and beyond

Twenty-three people took services at the church during the period from July 1993 until October 1994 when the Rev Frederick Kilner was licensed as Priest-in-Charge, with the Rev Malcolm Raby licensed as Team Vicar [PCC]. In 1998 the Rev Raby was appointed priest-in-charge at Over & the following year the Rev John Sansom was licensed as team Vicar responsible for Stretham & Thetford [PCC].

In 1996 a Pastoral scheme was implemented for the dissolution of the parish of Stretham with Thetford & the creation of a new benefice of the Ely parishes of St Mary, Chettisham St Peter & Prickwillow & the parishes of Stretham, Lt Thetford & Stuntney under a team ministry.

Having lain vacant for a number of years the Rectory was converted to become a home for Autistic Adults.

Improvements within the church have seen a Loop system installed to assist the hard of hearing, the overhaul of the clock, a new path in the churchyard together with considerable work on its maintenance undertaken with the assistance of East Cambridgeshire District Council.

In 1997 a special service celebrated 775 years of the church in Stretham and it continues to play a major part of village life as we enter the new millennium. Most striking of all has been the installation of floodlighting which has made the church building a major feature of the village at night.

The year 2000 sees Stretham in good shape; buildings which a few years ago were derelict have been restored, the Parish Council continues to up-rate public amenities and publishes a newsletter which gives each resident an opportunity to keep up to date with village life.

The pressure for additional housing will doubtless see even more of the open spaces within the village developed, and eyes will inevitably be turned to the open spaces on the periphery. The allotments on the Newmarket Road are no longer fully utilised for husbandry or farming and may come under pressure.

The Newmarket Road itself carries heavy traffic and has been the site of numerous accidents especially between Green End and Read's Street. Some realignment of the road around the allotments may be necessary to reduce the danger to residents and motorists alike.

Although conservation area controls will ensure that the fundamental core of the village remains largely the same its character will inevitably change as the people change.

One thing that may unite newcomer and older resident is an interest in the past; if this Millennium history, incomplete as it is, stimulates that in any way then it will be worthwhile

Mike Petty

Turbulent Priests : Appendices List

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Appendix 1 : Manors

- 1086 Domesday Book : the Manor lies in the demesne of the church of Ely [VCH p153] [SN47]
- 1109 became Episcopal Manor, one of the smaller ones with no important tenants by military service [VCH p153]; **Ethwold**, Bishop of Winchester purchased the Manor and presented it to the monks of Ely [SB33p9]
- 1320 Bishop judged to be the Lord of the Manor [SN169]
- 1356 total receipts fell; fisheries “Estewater”, Hayfen & “Berlake” produced revenue but 20 acres of fennemedwe were flooded and worthless as was the ruined Manor house of Strethambury [VCH p.153]
- 1501-5 **Thomas Gallant** or Gallon leased Manor by Bishop Redman
- 1529c **Richard Goode** leased Manor by Bishop West; Goode bequeathed tenancy to sons **Thomas Goode** & Richard Goode jointly, Richard jun sold his share to Thomas
- 1548 Manor house let for £9 13.4, demesne for £2.1.6 & fisheries for £15.7.4 [VCH p153]
- 1567 dispute over tenancy of Manor House. Bishop Redman 1501-5 had leased it to **Thomas Gallant** for a term which was still unexpired when Henry Gallant of Wilburton, Thomas’ grandson, claimed it against **Robert March** of Ely. March claimed on lease made about 1529 by Bishop West to Richard Goode and argued this lease cancelled previous one. Goode had bequeathed his tenancy to his sons Thomas & Richard jointly and sale of his moiety by Richard the younger to Thomas produce further complications. Judgement given in favour of March [VCH p153 SN164]
- 1581 fresh survey made of Manor preparatory to detaching it from possessions of the see. Rents of assize yielded £16.15.6; total capital value £1,656 at 40 years purchase but considered the value might be increased. Fisheries let to Richard Arkenstall, nephew of late Bishop Cox at £40 a year – therefore of £1,600 capital value but estimated they would fetch £40 above this. The Berrystead or Manor house was valued at 40 times its annual rent - £486.13.4. Demesne, or what was left of it, was still let at £2.1.6 . [VCH p153 SN164] 1581-1600 the lessee of Manor was **Richard Drake** who sub-let to **Henry Vernon**. He wanted to purchase the Manor of which he was tenant. The actual grantee that year was **Sir Miles Sandys**. He was soon in dispute with his tenants over common rights [VCH p.153 SB100 Stitt p5] (see Appendix 2)
- 1600 when Manor was alienated from See of Ely the avowson (right to appoint vicar) remained with Bishop. Alienated to Crown by Bishop Heton, possibly as the price of his appointment to the Bishopric by Queen Elizabeth after the See had been vacant 18 years; during vacancy revenues went to Royal purse [VCH p155 Stitt p5]
- 1654 **Sir Miles Sandys jun** dies without issue, Manor passed, probably by purchase to **Sir Charles Sedley**, the Restoration dramatist and wit, who with wife Catharine (Savage) was dealing with it in 1658 [VCN p154 SN164]
- 1658 About 1658 Manor passed in moieties between **Sir William Walker** and family of **Hanson**, and the latter moiety passing to the **Harbords** became sub-divided.
- 1659 **Sir Walter Walker** was joint Lord with **John Hampson**. Walker was a Judge of the Courts of Admiralty & of Probate; he was a zealous Royalist and his estate in Herts. became heavily mortgaged during time of Civil War. [SN154 VCH p154 Stitt p5]
- 1664 Rev Brunsell dispute with the Lords of the Manor (see appendix 4)
- 1674 Sir Walter Walker dies; he left two sons, **Walter Walker** & Sir George Walker who was obliged to sell his Hertfordshire estates c1680 & died in prison, having lost his inheritance in 1690
- 1675 Rev Brunsell's petition to Bishop against Sir Walter Walker & Jn Hampson, Lords of Manor ... “Sir Walter Walker out of a greedy and covetous design to get themselves more than did of right belong to them did in the time of the late usurper, Richard Cromwell (1659) exhibit their bill against Robert Carr, rector. claiming to hold all fens absolutely free from tithes” (Appendix 4)
- 1691 death of **Lady Mary Walker** in November 1691. She was the widow of Sir Walter Walker. She owned half of the Manor of Stretham which comprised seven messuages, 11 acres of arable, 130 acres of pasture and 432 acres of fen ground. These she bequeathed to her grandson, **Walter Walker** who dies without issue before 1703.
- 1694 **Walter Walker** vouchee in recovery of Manor; the Manor continued in the hands of members of the Walker family
- 1719 **Walter Walker** (son of Sir Walter & Lady Mary) dies; estate probably passes to his son **John Walker**
- 1758 **John Walker** sells his estate which was purchased by the **Earl of Hardwicke** , John would then have been 57 years old & died in 1760

- 1759 **Charles Gould** buys land from **John Walker, Richard Palmer & Sir Thomas Palmer**, Gould pays £6,904 to Palmer, £595 to Walker (CRO R50.22.36 – SN153)
- 1761 **Charles Gould** buys moiety of the Manor from **William Walker & Mrs Eleanor Walker** (CRO R50.22.37 – SN153); Charles Gould pays **Wm Walker, Jane Walker, Eleanor Walker & John Walker** the son of John, & **Charles Martindale**,
- 1774 **Sir Charles Gould** united the Manor. He was judge advocate general and a favourite of King George III, knighted in 1779, made a baronet in 1792 & a Privy Councillor in 1802. He married Jane, eldest daughter of Thomas Morgan Lord Lieutenant of Monmouth and Brecon & when she inherited the family lands in 1792 he changed his name to **Gould Morgan**. He spent a great deal of money buying land from the **Walkers** and from **William 5th Baron Byron of Rochdale** & inherited the other moiety which had passed through the **Hampson & Harbord** families. Eventually he owned 1,213 of the 4,085 acres in the parish. The house at Plantation Gate dates from this time & he is said to have occasionally lived in Plantation House.
- 1806 **Sir Charles Gould** dies, Manor passes to **Charles Gould Morgan**, on condition that when he died the estate passed to Sir Charles Gould's eldest son Charles Morgan
- 1814 **Charles Gould Morgan** dies, estates pass to **Charles Morgan**
- 1824 **Sir Charles Morgan** gives Manor to his son **George Gould Morgan** on his marriage to **Eliza Anne Beville**
- 1837 **Inclosure** open fields measuring 2,390 acres inclosed; was about half the total area of the parish. There were 78 allottees of whom the chief were William Edwards Read (228 acres), George Gould Morgan, lord of the Manor (173 acres), Thomas Waddelow Granger (142 a) & the Ely Feofees (135 a) [VCH p.152 SN20 SN117]
- 1839 Manor Court of G.G. Morgan & W.E.Read [CH]
- 1845 death **G.G. Morgan**, sometime MP for Brecon who owned 1,213 of the 4,085 acres in the parish; executors held Manorial rights 6 years later [VCH p154]
- 1861 Lordship of the Manor was divided between Lt-Col (afterwards General) **Sir G.H.S. Willis** & the Rev **William Titterton Marsh**, whose wives were G.G. Morgan's two daughters
- 1900 death of **G.H.S. Willis**, by then the sole Lord of the Manor. A trust was established for the benefit of his son, **Harry W.M. Willis** as tenant for life.
- 1926 **Harry W. Morgan Willis** sells Manor to **Sir Frederick Hiam** [SN155]

Appendix 2 : **The Sandys Family**

In 1601 Queen Elizabeth granted the Manor of Stretham to Samuel Sandys & Sir Miles Sandys of Wilburton. The family represented an imposing presence in the community, and one that caused controversy throughout the area.

Sir Miles Sandys senior (1563-1645) was the third son of Edwin Sandys, who as Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University had preached against Queen Mary and supported Lady Jane Gray for which he was imprisoned. He fled to Germany, returning when Elizabeth came to the throne & went on to be Archbishop of York.

Sir Miles himself was described as “a gentleman of polite parts and learning” who was “possessed of a fair estate at Wilburton”. Born in 1563 he was knighted by King James I in 1603, created a Baron in 1611, served as Member of Parliament for Cambridge University 1614, for Huntingdonshire 1621-2 & Cambridgeshire 1628-9. He was also sheriff of Cambridge & Huntingdon 1615-6.

Sir Miles married twice, first to Elizabeth, by whom he had seven sons, all of whom died without issue. She was buried at Stretham in October 1636. Later when aged 64 he married Mary West, a widow aged 40. He died 1645.

As well as disputes at Stretham Sir Miles had problems at Willingham where he entered on an estate by a grant from the crown dated 8 Nov 1601 on payment of £2,069. His tenants acted "unlawfully, riotously and in forciful manner" & pulled down the fence of an inclosure he had erected. The matter went to arbitration but in 1611 he abandoned some of his claims.

This was a period of debate and discussion about the large-scale drainage of the fens. In 1600 an Act of Parliament was passed which established a principal that owners of flooded land should give some of it to people who were prepared to drain it and keep it dry permanently. At his accession in 1603 King James I showed a lively interest in drainage. He asked the commissioners of sewers, who were responsible for drainage without the individual parishes, to make a list of people who were prepared to participate in such a venture. Sir Miles Sandys persuaded the King that he had a plan for such a scheme in the Isle of Ely which, he claimed, would be for the public good. However a pamphlet entitled the “Anti-projector” revealed that it was all a fraud and it was condemned by parliament as a “base cheating monopoly”. Sir Miles however continued to promote drainage schemes.

In 1605 the Lord of the Manor of Thetford, and the Rector of Stretham, combined to appeal to the Court of Exchequer about some of Sandys activities. They gave a judgement in 1607 by which Sandys was empowered to inclose his lands but 1,600 acres were to be set aside as common pasture for tenants of the manor and he was excluded from any interference, or keeping cattle on the commons. It also relieved copyholders from various illegal or exorbitant demands. Other lands formerly ploughed that belonged to Sir Miles were converted to pasture.

But it was not the end of the difficulties for the villagers went back to the court claiming they still did not have sufficient land to pasture their stock. A new set of orders was made in June 1609 when Sandys was also given permission to erect a cottage at a new ferry allowing tenants to cross for the same price as at the old one.

Sir Miles supported drainage schemes at Willingham and Haddenham despite protests that the work was unnecessary and their fens would flood, the work went ahead. 2,000 people demonstrated at Ely in June 1619, banging drums and firing muskets round bonfires for much of the night. The sheriff and two justices urged a peaceful settlement of the dispute but Sir Miles took the matter to Star Chamber.

Similar schemes in Littleport also met opposition. The granting of a commission to drain the fens there was followed by disturbances in 1619 involving Sir Thomas Josselyn, who ended so deep in debt that he was forced to hand over his manor of Littleport to his creditors, including Sir Miles.

At Stretham a new Rector, Nicholas Felton also found himself in dispute with Sir Miles. When he was appointed in 1621 he claimed that several areas of open ground which had been held by previous rectors were flooded and so had not been perambulated. Sir Miles & his son had inclosed and occupied the grounds for 8 years, ploughed and sown part with corn and grain and stocked the rest with sheep and cattle. But he had not paid tithes to the rector who complained: "They pretended the land were not part of the manor of Stretham or lye in parish whereas they very well know that they do". In 1622 the rights of the commoners were once more being discussed & bylaws defined the rights in greater detail.

In 1623 there was a dispute over commons at Mepal & Sutton when about 4000 acres of fens were enclosed by "some rich men", who had secured the agreement of the Dean and Chapter by granting them a share of enclosures. Sir Miles, as tenant of the manor, was probably involved in the whole business.

In 1630 large scale plans for fen drainage were once again in progress & Sir Miles enlisted as one of the Adventurers, putting up the funding to assist the Earl of Bedford in his scheme, promising to make the fens dry throughout the Summer months. One aspect of the scheme put forward by Cornelius Vermuyden was the cutting of a new straight river from Earith to Salter's Lode, near Denver. Most of the water which had previously flowed down the Old West River would now be channelled along the new river. The approval for such works had been granted in 1630 but met with opposition from local people.

Also in 1630 commoners at Over denounced works constructed by Sir Miles Sandys junior which had resulted in loss of their feeding or low, grounds "which are at every small rising of water surrounded or drowned". About 6 years later Sir Miles and his fellow commissioners of sewers ordered the cutting of another new drain near the River Ouse. 36 commoners journeyed to a meeting to present their case. But Sir Miles junior would not permit them to speak "- but commanded them to be gone or else he would make a proclamation and commit them. By which means they were compelled to depart and were not heard".

In 1632 there was disorder at Soham over "improvements" and in Sutton fen there were more disturbances in May 1632 when 11 inhabitants were convicted as rioters before Sir Miles.

In 1634 Sir Miles Sandys was granted a market in Stretham on Thursday and two annual fairs on the feasts of St Mark & St Michael and the two days following; with court of pie powder, together with reasonable tolls for stalls or saleable things. While this might bring increased commerce it may not have been universally welcome for in 1636 there was plague in the Lincolnshire fens and all fairs within that district were suspended. Sir Miles' wife Elizabeth died in October 1636 and was buried at Stretham. Two years later Sir Robert Sandis of Wilburton was also buried here.

By 1637 Vermuyden's new river had been cut, the scheme was pronounced a success and Sir Miles journeyed to see the first flood channelled down the new river. To everybody's consternation the water broke down the banks and overflowed onto the adjacent country. It was obviously a failure. Instead of draining the fens Sir Miles had drained his pockets, though with so many powerful men in the same situation they were allowed to keep much of the land they'd been awarded for the scheme.

Riots broke out at Littleport in 1638, where labourers assembled for a game of football as an excuse to break down banks and at Wicken drainage works were attacked by "the meaner sort of people". Sir Miles senior was worried, fearing "a general rebellion in all the fen towns" but when given the opportunity to question an informant he declined, claiming Wicken was outside his jurisdiction.

In 1638 King Charles I declared that he would take over the drainage work and do a better job – making the fens dry in winter as well as summer months. Meanwhile Oliver Cromwell, collector of Ely Cathedral tithes, started to petition for better compensation for fenmen whose lands were affected by the drainage proposals.

In 1641 Rev Felton once more complained about Sir Miles' Stretham activities, claiming that he could not even pay the debts he owed to the king and was utterly remediless. He asked that Miles be made to produce surveys showing ancient boundaries that he had previously refused to make available to him.

But the King had other matters on his mind. He had converted to Catholicism, appointed a new Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud in 1633 and a new Bishop of Ely, Wren, was seeking to beautify churches with candles. Felton followed the new dictates, railing in the communion table, making new steps to the altar and bowing twice as he went up and came back.

These religious changes infuriated puritans such as Oliver Cromwell, adding another dimension to the disputes of the time. With the outbreak of the Civil War England divided into factions, brother against brother. Cambridge University supported the King, Cambridge town and county backed parliament, as did Miles Sandys.

During the Civil War the Sandys were key figures in the parliamentary organisation, despite being actively involved in fen drainage, which was something Oliver Cromwell and the fenmen had opposed.

The fenland around the Isle of Ely was a crucial area. Still largely undrained it was an area easy to hold and difficult to capture. The area was in turmoil, but nobody could be sure whether people were agitated about drainage, religion, the King or Parliament. There were other factors too. The Bishop of Ely was a power in the land with his own gaol at Ely which was much disliked & was broken open. And Sir Miles was proving obnoxious, arresting a number of prospective parliamentary fighting men in Sutton who objected to him enclosing land.

As the Civil War raged throughout the area. Cromwell secured the approaches onto the Isle of Ely with a fort at Elford Close amongst others. In 1645 the Royalists made an attempt on Ely but by then their cause was lost.

One casualty of the war was Parson Felton. He was accused of having supported the Royalist cause, "reading the King's declaration, and refusing to read the ordinance of Parliament, and left off praying for the same". He was also accused of persuading a parishioner not to join Cromwell's Regiment & soldiers found arms and a barrel of gunpowder in his house. In addition it was said he got drunk, gambled & paid too much attention to his curate's wife. Did Sir Miles play any part in the allegations against once who had been such a trouble to him?

Felton had certainly continued his opposition to the power of Sir Miles Sandys for at a Visitation of 1638 it was reported that "A chapell erected by Sir Miles Sandys not yet consecrated". This may have been erected following the death of Sir Miles' wife in 1636 or his brother in 1638. It was described by Cole as an "exceeding handsome and elegant chapel of free stone, ... very large, finely roofed and well carved".

Felton was ejected from his living before 19th March 1643 by a warrant of the Earl of Manchester, & a new rector, Matthew Clarke, who was approved by the Assembly of Divines, was instituted in his place

On March 23rd 1645 the church witnessed the funeral of Sir Miles Sandys. His estate passed to his son, Sir Miles Sandys junior who like his father was knighted at Whitehall in 1616. He married Elizabeth, daughter Thos Park of Wisbech.

The problem of fen drainage continued. In 1649 William, 5th Earl of Bedford, and his old team of adventurers had started on a new scheme, once more engineered by Vermuyden and supported by Sandys. This time works included a New Bedford River, alongside the Old, with a washland in between. There were new barrier banks, sluices at Denver and Earith – and renewed opposition, not least from workers still waiting to be paid for their last efforts. In 1653 the South Level was judged to be properly drained at last.

Sir Miles Sandys junior saw his labour's vindicated but he died without issue in 1654 and the title lapsed.

His body was probably laid to rest in the family's chapel which stood at the north end of the church. This may have been constructed in the 1630s when Sir Miles' wife, Dame Elizabeth died in 1636 and Sir Robert Sandys of Wilburton was buried at Stretham two years later.

This chapel was described by William Cole in 1748: "At the East end of the North isle, is built an exceeding handsome and elegant chapel of freestone & very large, finely roofed & leaded and well carved. The entrance into it is by three handsome arches with two beautiful stone pillars and closed with a large screen of wood, over which is inscribed 'We that live and are remaining at the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep'. By which words, I suppose, it was erected by some of the Sandy's family who lived here and at Wilburton, for a burial place for their family." The memory of the family was not revered however for he goes on: "It is now in great squalidness and used for any rubbish and to run lead in for leading the church. At the East end is fixed a good handsome monument of alabaster, but now much broken and defaced ...".

In 1779 the memory of the hated Miles Sandys was erased when his chapel was demolished. A faculty was granted to the rector and churchwardens to pull down "a building formerly used as a School house and sometime as a burial place adjoining the north side of the chancel, which includes one arch of the aisle but which is not used as a Burial place or Schoolhouse". This was done and the monuments perished, apart from one.

High in the north aisle is an almost unreadable memorial to Margaret Tyas the second wife of Thomas Sandys, esq. who gave him seven sons & three daughters, five of whom survived infancy. She died in July 1625. There used to be two other memorials, one to Thomas' first wife, Mary Thornhurst who died in July 1598 and was buried in London. When the church there was demolished he brought the memorial to Stretham. It has now disappeared. Both wives were subsequently depicted on a memorial, praying on either side of their husband. But by 1748 the figure of Thomas had been stolen and now only the small memorial inscription to Margaret survives as a reminder of the Sandys family

Appendix 3 : Common rights at Stretham, 1607-1614

Extract from a decree made by the Court of Exchequer 1607 confirming award between Sir Miles Sandy's Lord of the Manor of Stretham and tenant and commoners of the manor.

Ordered, Every owner of a yard of land copyhold held of the manor, shall plough one acre of wheat seed and one acre of barley seed for the lord of the manor. For every half yard of land to plough half an acre of wheat and half an acre barley and so on in proportion. The lord making unto the tenants the usual allowance due, for the said works. Those tenants of copyhold houses or tenants for which they do works called 'pound Reapes' shall do the same as usual, the lords making allowances due for the same. The lord shall have the foldage in his fold of such cottagers sheep as have usually folded there, but only so many there as they have a right to be there.

No other tenants shall be compelled to fold his sheep in the lords fold, but it is lawful for tenants and owners of land to fold such sheep as they may lawfully keep in the fields of Stretham and commons, upon their own land without the interruption of the land.

It is decreed that all copyhold tenants and cottagers of the Manor of Stretham, shall have, hold and enjoy quietly without interruption, all the land, meadow, pasture and marsh now occupied by them as part of their copyhold or cottage, yet under and subject to the ancient forfeitures, conditions, customs, duties and services other than such as are hereafter discharged or dispensed with.

The lord is debarred from claiming as demense land from tenant or cottagers any of the land now belonging to them.

The lord is debarred from claiming heriot, and days work from the tenants except the days work. now decreed. It is decreed that the lord is debarred from demanding a fine for the admission of any tenant, to lands greater than one years rent due to him, with the exception of the next fines due for admission to lands already surrendered.

Cottagers and tenants may fell and sell woods of timber growing on the land, without incurring any danger of forfeitures, also the other acts on their lands without needing licence from the lord, except deliberately pulling down their copyhold houses or tenements, and not redefining the same within three years, and also willfully allowing the house or tenement to decay and to continue in decay and unrepaired for three years after notice by the lord for repair or redifing them.

Tenants may let their copyholds for up to twenty one years without incurring any forfeiture, provided they pay to the lord, money to the value of one years rent by way of a fine.

If the lord purchase any lands etc now held by tenants then the lord shall have the same interest, lots, commons, benefits etc in Thetford Hall Fen, Grunty Fen and the 1,600 acres, as the previous owners enjoyed by the orders and byelaws of the manor of the lord and shall be governed like other tenants by the byelaws and orders made for stinting, ordering, governing etc of the lands now allotted to other tenants, unless the conditions be altered by general accent of the lord and all other tenants.

The lord may without hindrance, fence, ditch and enclosure all or as much of his land as he wishes, lying in the fields of Stretham, debarring all other tenants from right of common or pasturing sheep or cattle, and immediately upon enclosure the lord is barred from keeping any cattle within any common arable field or common way or meadows not enclosed.

The lord may build one cottage or cote at the new intended ferry, not taking more than one acre of ground, and allowing an equal area of land elsewhere, he must allow the tenants etc of Stretham and Thetford such freedom and privileges of the new ferry as they have at the old ferry, making a charge for ferrying them, their families, servants and cattle across the river.

The lord as quickly as possible to assign the allotted 1,600 acres to the complainants, and other tenants, and after the land is laid out the lord is barred from taking any commonage or other profit in the said 1,600 acres, and in the Thetford Hay Fen or the meadows of Elford and meadows and marshes in Hole Fen.

It is agreed that if the tenants etc partition for the subdivision of the 1,600 acres between themselves, the lord shall agree until subdivision that that part of the 1,600 acres called Hole Fen, Lazier Fen and Cheer Fen Plains shall yearly be preserved, to be mown, and divided amongst the tenants according to custom. That part of the 1,600 acres which lies between Barlake and Snout Ditch shall be fed only with milk kine and weaning calves of the tenants etc, from the feast of St Mathias till the end of harvest. That part of the 1,600 acres called Starlock, and so much of Hay Fen as is in the 1,600 acres a yearly..... from the feast of the annunciation of the Virgin May until the end of harvest, shall be fed only with working horses, and no sheep shall be fed between the feast of the annunciation of the Virgin Mary and the feast of St Andrew.

A majority of the commoners may make orders and byelaws regarding the feed on the fen ground without interference of the lord and all the tenants bound by these byelaws.

A COPYHODEN AFFIDAVIT MADE BEFORE THE BARONS OF THE EXCHEQUER 25th MARCH 1609

Memorandum that Michael Flud of Stretham, clerk and Thomas Frankham of Thetford.

The commoners of Stretham and Thetford have had the right of feeding their working horses and working mares on the commons and common fen grounds. The deponents say that by a decree made in 1607 they are debarred of the ancient rights by a byelaw made by the majority, were by the commoners of Stretham are not allowed to keep sufficient numbers of horses, and the commoners of Thetford are debarred by a recent byelaw from keeping any working horses or working mares on those commons as they have done in the past, and the arable lands of Thetford are untitled, the corn now growing is unlikely to be harvested at the proper time because of the lack of working horses.

ORDERS MADE 28th JUNE 1609 CONCERNING THE USAGE OF THE RIGHTS IN STALLOCK AND HAY FEN FOR WORKING HORSES

It is ordered that all inhabitants having ancient commonable rights may keep on the commons, 5 working horses or mares with 3 foals as they have done before the byelaw.

Anybody tilling 15 acres or less may keep 1 extra horse.

"	"	up to 30	"	"	"	"	2	"	"
"	"	"	45	"	"	"	3	"	"
"	"	"	60	"	"	"	4	"	"

It is lawful for the parson of Stretham in regard to getting in the harvest to keep 3 extra horses. Nobody shall exceed the rate as set down.

ORDERS MADE 1609 LAID DOWN FOR THE INHABITANTS OF THETFORD CONCERNING THE USAGE OF COMMON IN GOLDSMOOR FOR WORKING HORSES

Any inhabitants may keep 3 horses etc and extra ones as for Stretham.

The lord of Thetford can keep 2 extra horses, because his tradition been allowed a greater proportion of mowing and feeding on the Commons.

ORDERS MADE BY THE LEET 29th APRIL 1614

1. Thomas Egnie has not scoured out his drain.
2. Richard Sheirbrooke to pull down a wall standing on the common where he lives.
3. Widow Salmons chimney is faulty.
4. Francis Barker has made a ditch from Clay Lakes End to Elford and he must fill it in.
5. Nobody must set nets in any lake or ditch, half an hour after sun down.
6. John Ramsies chimney is faulty.
7. Richard Sheirbrooke lives on ground encroaching on the common.
8. Christopher Isacson has taken in Robert Webb and must get rid of him.

9. Wm Piggott has taken in Geo Wells and must get rid of him.
10. Item, we agree that everyone shall make his part sufficient in the pound wall yearly and every year with in four days warning given by the constables or fen reeves upon pain to forfeit for every such default three shillings and four pence.
11. Every man shall make his particular part on the East side of Bar-lake within three days warning by fen reeves of forfeit three and fourpence.

ORDERS AND BYELAWS MADE AND AGREED BY THE COURT LEET AND COURT BARON OF STRETHAM ON 29th APRIL 1614.

1. Whereas divers, idle, evil, disposed persons do often in time of harvest take much of the corn and grain of the inhabitants of Stretham, depriving the true owners, we rule it unlawful for anybody to glean and to take any corn upon any field belonging to the manor of Stretham. Nobody directly or indirectly to glean until the harvest is fully ended upon fine of 5/- against anybody who procured or harboured any gleaners.
2. It shall be lawful for anybody under 16 or above 60 years of age or being sickly or unable to work during harvest as judged by the parson, and not having any parcel of commonable messuage to glean any scattered corn left by the owners after the grain has been carried away. The gleaners may not glean within three hands of any standing or uncarterd corn upon a fine of 5/-.
3. It is unlawful for any owner of land to let anybody glean on their land against these byelaws or be fined 5/-.
4. It is unlawful to glean before 8am or after 6pm or be fined 5/-.
6. The parson to collect any fines, half of it to go to the lord, the other half, once expenses paid goes to the parish.

Extract from "Common rights at Cottenham & Stretham in Cambridgeshire; edited by W. Cunningham. Royal Historical Society, 1910

Appendix 4 : **Rev Henry Brunsell's complaint**

Reverend Henry Brunsell's complaint against the treatment he received from the Lords of the Manor, made just after the death in 1674 of Sir Walker Walker, the man who had caused him most problems.

I have simplified the text, modernised the spelling and present it in the first person – as if Brunsell himself is speaking

To the right honourable Thomas Earl of Danby Lord High Treasurer of England, Sir John Duncomb Knt, Chancellor, an under Treasurer of his Majesties Court of Exchequer, Sir (blank) Lord Chief Baron, and to the rest of the barons of the said court.

I was inducted in August 1662 into the Rectory of Stretham with all its rights and have continued to receive all manner of Tithes, and ought to have a right of commoning in all commons within the parish.

But in 1659 Sir Walter Walker Knt and John Hampson Esq coming to be Lords of the Manor of Stretham, "out of a greedy and covetous design to get to themselves more than did of right belong unto them" started an action against Robert Carr, who was then Rector. They claimed to hold "all the fens & fen grounds, moors, marshes & fen lands" of the Manor absolutely freed from paying any tithes "of hay fodder or fen fodder or of anything mowed or cut down there".

After I had been in the Rectory about two years, I went to court against Thomas Gotobed, Francis Langford, Richard Bent & William Papworth for non payment of tithes due to me. Sir Walter Walker drew up their answer & persuaded them & other inhabitants to join with him in an action against me, hoping to share some of those tithes amongst themselves. The court found in my favour, against Sir Walter Walker

In 1664 Sir Walter & Philip Harbord, then Lords of the Manor, together with William Humphrey, William Townesend, John Dymocke, Edward Sterne, William Read, Thomas Gotobed, Francis Langford, & Richard Bent, freeholders & copyholders of the manor, together with John Lightfoot, George Blackerby, & Alexander Hall, owners of lands in Thetford, went to court claiming that there were certain allotments in Hold Fen, Chare Fen & Lazer Fen, & a piece of ground in Hold Fen called the Parsons Holt which were given to the parson in full payment for all tithes of hay, fodder, fen grass & fen fodder out of all the rest of those fens.

They also claimed I had no rights for tithes from any other fen grounds in the parish, except the mere or fen grounds called Stowbrinke, Stallock Croft, Deekes Ground, Willow Rowe, Washload Brink, the three grounds called the Mere Skirts, & the mere itself, for all of which they claimed that an annual payment of 30/- had been paid in lieu of all tithes. But they did not say when where & by whom this was payable.

600 or 700 acres were enclosed by the Lords of the Manor in 1658 which had never previously been mowed & from which the parson used to have tithe for cattle fed thereon, & had sued for tithe-hay from 100 acres of that ground. The Parson had recovered £18 damages at the Cambridge Assizes. Tithes in kind were paid on all the lands, whether arable, pasture, meadow, marsh or fen & also on all the fishings & weirs belonging to the Lord of the Manor.

I have been informed that the mere grounds were formerly fishings, covered with water, & continued so until the commons were divided by Sir Miles Sandys about 1607. I have perused the tithing books of my predecessors, & find one man paying for the tithe of the mere until 1609 but no mention made afterwards. In 1610 I find none of the grounds mentioned except Stow Brink for which the tenants were paying tithes of 5s in one year, & 5s 6d in others. I also found that when Queen Elizabeth granted the Manor to Samuel Sandys Esq & Miles Sandys Esq, one tenth of the value of the mere was 30s.

The Parsons Holt was always part of the glebe belonging to the rectory, & has been listed in terriers of the glebe lands. The next pieces of land, belonging to the Lords of the Manor & more than 20 owners, used to be mowed every year and always paid tithe-hay in kind; & the other allotments mentioned belonged to the Parsonage house & the other house as ancient commonable messuages.

After I had answered the complaints, I was persuaded to submit my case to arbitration by William Pierpoint & Thomas Chichely Esqs. I did so partly because of threats from the complainants (some of whom said that

they would spend a £1,000), partly by persuasion by Sir Charles Harbord, father of Philip Harbord, & also out of a desire to reach a compromise.

The arbitrators gave a judgement dated 10th December 1666 which was in eight parts:

- 1: They confirmed payment of 30s for the mere grounds, & added four to them, Johnsons Ground, Gores ground, Sternes Ground, & Calves-pasture, which were not mentioned in the depositions of the witnesses, some of whom were parties to the bill.
- 2 : They stopped me from claiming tithe-hay from the commonable mow-fens called Hold-fen, Charefen & Lazar Fen, without compensation.
- 3 : They prohibited me claiming any right of common in those grounds formerly inclosed by the Lords of the Manor which were part of the commons belonging to the village.
- 4: They said the Parson or his Curate, (not saying which) should enjoy right of common for the Chapel house in Thetford in the Thetford commons only.
- 5: They ordered that the commons in Stretham & Thetford should continue open, & that neither the Parson nor his Curate should seek for them to be improved by division
- 6: The Lords of the Manor should set out 20 acres of fen-land for the use of the Parson, & that no tithe of hay, grass or fodder should be paid out of any fen-ground, except the severals which lay by Hold-fen which should pay tithe as previously (without saying what that tithe was). All other tithes should be paid as before
- 7: They ordered that all suites already begun should be stopped.
- 8: I was to enter into a bond of £500 with Sir Charles Harbord & Sir Walter Walker to agreed to everything; then the Lords of the Manor would pay me £20 & the owners of every commoning house in Stretham & Thetford would pay me 10 shillings within 6 weeks.

I agreed to accept the bond without being aware how injurious the said award would be, relying on the integrity of the arbitrators & their knowledge of the law. The award was then published; but on reading it I quickly saw how prejudicial it was. Nonetheless I have performed my part of the award.

But neither Sir Walter Walker in his lifetime, nor any of the other parties observed the bond. Nor has Dame Mary Walker, the widow & sole executrix of Sir Walter. None have paid me what was agreed they should pay each year, or what was otherwise due to me.

In addition Sir Walter Walker in 1667 & various years afterwards has fed many oxen within the parish without paying any tithes for them. He also lopped various loads of willows & other wood, which Thomas Gotobed the younger disposed of without paying the legal tithe. Dame Mary Walker continued to do so.

Thomas Gotobed had for several years kept many cows & horses without paying tithes or the customary rates. These rates are 18d apiece yearly for every cow or steer or ox fed on the common, 6d for every horse or mare not used in tillage, (more for those kept on inclosed pastures), 2d for every foal, 12d for every calf & 6d for every lamb. That these rates have been previously paid is shown by the tithe-book of Mr Felton, the incumbent before the Civil War, who recovered payment from Richard Ribsheat about 1637, as many of the inhabitants well remember & as some of them have confessed in my hearing.

As well as this Thomas Gotobed, for his own or Dame Mary Walker's use, has for the past three years sowed various acres of titheable fen-lands with oats, barley & cole-seed, & refused to pay tithes or render any satisfaction. Thomas Eaton has for five years enjoyed a ferry & one or more fishings belonging to Sir Walter Walker or Dame Mary Walker & refused to pay the tithes which according to the books of Parson Lawrence & others had been paid for more than 50 years before.

William Townesend, Thomas Salter, Thomas Gotobed the elder & John Bent have kept many milking cows without paying the tithes. In 1668 & several years afterwards John Lightfoot, George Plackerby, Alexander Hall, William Lightfoot, Richard Macer, Jeremiah Hinkin, Henry Hinkin, Richard Dimock, Clement Towers & Thomas Ellington have each kept eight or more cows & other cattle, together with many calves & foals without paying any tithes.

William Humphrey, William Townsend, John Dimock & Francis Langford, joint owners together with others of a commonable house where John Ashen now lives, have refused for the last nine years to pay the ten shilling as agreed.

The owners & inhabitants of the commonable houses where Thomas Salter, Thomas Muries, Nathaniel Gotobed, William Papworth, John Granger, Stephen Day, the widow Newman, Francis Outlaw, Richard Holmes, Richard Langford. & Thomas Ellington live have also refused to pay ten shillings apiece agreed by the award.

As a result I am not only in a far worse condition than I was before by the award, but my Church & successor parsons are totally disinherited and defrauded of our just rights. We have no means to sue for redress, whether it was agreed as due by the award or not, because otherwise we would have to pay the bond of £500.

All these advantages the Lords, commoners & inhabitants hold to the great prejudice of the rector. They sometimes say that they would stick to the agreement for payment of tithes, sometimes that they will make different arrangements & other times that they will observe the award.

But in truth they observe none of them, nor can I compel them by law to observe the award, which was gained by the earnest importunities & cunning practices of the said Sir Walter Walker, who drew it up for the arbitrators.

I have been advised that the Award is void, which I hope this Court will agree, because the then Lords of the Manor were Philip Harbord & Sir Walter Walker, & Harbord never submitted to the award, & nor did the inhabitants & commoners. My bond was given to Sir Charles Harbord who was a stranger to the interest submitted.

In addition the award is made with reference to my Curate & their successors, & seems to make a new agreement to discharge tithes through the Lords setting out 20 acres for the use of the rector. This has not been done & anyway such very inconsiderable recompense is against the law.

The award says that after the Lords set out 20 acres they shall not pay certain tithes, but the Lords know there is no ground for this except what was passed during the Commonwealth. Nor was any tithes less than the tenth of the full value ever paid when the Bishop of Ely conveyed the Manor to Queen Elizabeth or the Queen conveyed it to Samuel & Miles Sandys Esqr. All this will be shown by the conveyance in the custody of Dame Mary Walker, which I ask should be produced to this Court.

Finally it is ordered that the curate of Thetford shall only have common in Thetford, excluding the Rector. But the Rector's parsonage house & the other house in Thetford are ancient commonable houses, as is shown by ancient court records, & Thetford is only a hamlet belonging to Stretham having a Chapel of Ease, which I as Rector supply with a Curate removable at my will & pleasure.

As well as this I have lands belonging to my Rectory in Thetford as well as in Stretham, they being all one parish. The Lords of the Manor by agreement between themselves & some of the commoners enclosed the commons, the Lords giving a remission from their respective services, & they made their respective fines certain & small which before were arbitrary. But as to my right of Common no satisfaction has ever been made.

I acknowledge that being overawed by the threats of Sir Walter Walker, I received from Sir Charles Harbord & Sir Walter £20, which was no more than was then due for tithes.

About March 1667 I signed a document prepared by Walter Walker giving acknowledgement of the agreement & some receipt of money. I accept that I received some inconsiderable profits from 20 acres given by the Lords, & some of the Commoners have paid ten shillings apiece yearly for some years. All of this I am willing to discount from the arrears of tithes, which I hope this Court will compel them to make.

These matters are very prejudicial to the Rector, his Church & successors, & can only be resolved with the help of this Court, as I am liable to be sued at Common Law because of the bond which now belongs by survivorship to Sir Charles Harbord.

Nor can I compel the inhabitants to observe the award, as I cannot particularly say who have been inhabitants for the last ten years, nor what or how many acres they have sown etc.

The parties to this bill conspire together with others unknown at present, whose names when discovered should be added. I hope that when they are called they will set forth the truth of what I say & will show why the bond should be cancelled, the award made void & the said confederates give just satisfaction to me. May it please your Lordships to issue a writ of subpoena to Sir Charles Harbord, Philip Harbord, Dame Mary Walker and other conspirators when discovered, commanding them to appear in this court etc etc.

Note . The date of the petition appears to be about two or three years after the death of Sir Walter Walker he is stated to have died in 1674; the probable date is therefore 1676 or 1677. Dr Brunsell died in February 1678/9

Translated by Evelyn Young, edited by Mike Petty, May 2000

Appendix 5 : Will of Mary Walker, transcribed by Tom Doig
10.11.1691

CRO VC35.1 1691 CW

Will & Inventory of the goods of Dame Mary Walker of Stretham CAM

An inventory of the Goods & Chattels of Dame Mary Walker of Stretham in the Isle of Ely in the County of Cambridge, widdow, lately deceased, appraised by us whose names are hereinafter subscribed this tenth day of November 1691.

Imprimis

Apparrell & money in pockett	50:00:00
In plate being six silver salts, eleven spoons & one silver cupp valued at	05:00:00
In my lady's lodging chamber, one feather bed, bedding and necessities standing, one chest of drawers & cabinet & fower chairs	06:00:00
In the Closet in the room, one serviceable bed & chest of drawers	01:10:00
In the Chamber, one pair of stairs next the Ladies Lodging Room, one feather bed, three cane chairs, one trunk, a little table, looking glass	03:10:00
In the Hall Chamber, one feather bed & furniture to the same, five chairs, one table and glass & one table bedstead.	03:10:00
In the Kitching Chamber, one feather bed & furniture to the same, fower chairs & one table	01:10:00
In the Garrett, one feather bed, one flock bed for servants and necessities	01:05:00
In the Parlour, two tables, six chairs and six cushions & one wicker chair	01:10:00
In the Passage between the Parlor & Hall, six chairs and one table	00:15:00
In the Hall, three tables, five chairs, napkin press and close	02:00:00
In the Kitchin, brass, pewter, jack & rack, andirons, dresser, sloping stool & spitts, warming pan, seven chairs. Chiver, two tubs, two wash boilers & frying pann & bellows	06:00:00
In wood and coals	04:10:00
In Linnen	15:00:00
One old Coach, two old Grey horses & harness, one mare& fole, one filly & one heifer	08:00:00
Hay & Oats	10:00:00
Lumber and things unseen & forgott	01:00:00

In all

137:00:00

All the Goods aforenamed being the Goods of the Lady Mary Walker that were viewed and duly appraise by us whose names are hereunder written the day & year abovesaid.

John Dimock & the mark of Robert Outlaw

In the Name of God Amen, the two and twentieth day of October in the second year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord and Lady William and Mary by the grace of god of England & Scotland, France and Ireland, King and Queen, Defenders of the Faith, etc And in the year of our Lord One thousand six hundred and ninety, I, Dame Mary Walker of Stretham Manor in the Isle of Ely in the County of Cambridge, widdow, being of sound memory and perfect understanding, the Lord be praised for the same, do make my last will and testament in manner and forme following:

First: I bequeath and humbly comend my soul to Almighty God, my maker, to Jesus Christ, my Redeemer And to the holy Ghost, my sanctifyer, comforter and preserver assuredly trusting and believing that all my sins and frailties shall be freely remitted and pardoned by and through the all sufficient and meritorious sufferings of my lord and Saviour Jesus Christ And after this painfull and troublesome life ended I doe confidently hope and believe that I shall be made the taker of eternal rest, joy and happiness such as Eye hath not seen or ear heard neither hath entered into the heart of man to []

My body I bequeath to the earth and doo committ itt to decent and [proper] burial And as touching the disposition of my lands, Tenements and hereditaments and such temporal estates wherewith itt hath pleased God to bless me, I give and dispose thereof as follows:

Imprimis: I give bequeath and devise and grant unto Walter Walker, the son of Walter walker, deceased, my Grandson, all that my half part or Moiety of the Manor of Stretham aforesaid with the appurtenances containing seven messuages, eleven acres of arable lands, more or less: One hundred & thirty acres of pasture ground, more or less; & fower hundred, thirty and two acres of fenny or Marrish ground, more or less, in all and singular the appurtenances to the same belonging or in any wise applyning, situate or lying in the manor of Stretham aforesaid elsewhere in the Realm of England, To have and to hold the said Moiety of the Manor of Stretham aforesaid & all & singular the said Messuages, lands & tenements and hereditaments with the [appurtenances] to him, the said Walter Walker or to the issue Male of his body lawfully begotten And for default of such issue Male to Walter Walker, the son of Sir George Walker Knt., deceased, my grandson, or to the issue Male of his body lawfully begotten and soe from heir Male to heir Male provided always and upon this condition that my sons Grandson, the son of Walter Walker, my executor herein afternamed dying without issue Male and if the issue Male from time to time shall well and truly pay unto my Grandaughter, Elizabeth Walker, the eldest daughter of the above said Sir George Walker Knt, deceased, the summe of fifty pounds of lawful money of England, yearly and every year during the term of her natural life

And also the some of five and twenty pounds of like lawfull money unto my Grandaughter Susannah Walker, the second daughter of the said Sir George Walker, deceased, yearly and every year during the term of her natural life

And also the some of five and twenty pounds of like lawful money unto my Grandaughter [Esmie] Walker, the third daughter of the above said Sir George Walker Knt deceased, yearly and every year during the term of her natural life to be taken of the profitts of the Moiety of the Manor

of Stretham aforesaid at the feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Feast of St Michael the Archangel by even portions

And for non payment of the said Elizabeth Walker, Susannah Walker and [Esmie] Walker from tyme to tyme to distrain upon until the same be fully satisfied and paid unto them [as] arranged if any fortune to be unpaid.

Provided all for that if it shall fortune God to take my two Grandsons Walter Walker, the son of Walter Walker, and Walter Walker, the son of Sir George Walker Knt, deceased, before thaye shall have issue male lawfully begotten so as therefore no issue male producing of them Nor nor heir Male then I do will and desire the yearly somme of one hundred pounds of lawful money of England to be taken forth of the Moiety of the Manor of Stretham aforesaid to be paid in manner the following that is to say yearly and every year for over to the Manor of Southwick in the County of Northampton for the tyme being eighty pounds per annum the [] of Twenty pounds per annum [] thereof to be employed for everforward the maintenance of a Grammar School att Southwick aforesaid.

Item I do will and devise the some of fifty pounds per annum of the like lawful money of England to be taken forth of the Moiety of the Manor of Stretham aforesaid to bee paid yearly and every year for ever to the Manor of Claphorn in the County of Northampton aforesaid for the tyme being.

Item I do will and devise the some of fifty pounds per annum of like lawful money of England to be taken forth of the Moiety of the Manor of Stretham aforesaid to bee paid yearly and every year for ever to the Manor of Cahersforth in the County of Northampton aforesaid for the tyme being.

Item I do will and desire the some of thirty pounds per annum of like lawful money of England to be taken forth of the Moeity of the Manor of Stretham aforesaid to be employed for ever towards the maintenance of a Grammar School at Stretham aforesaid.

Item I give and bequeath unto my Grandaughter Lucy Walker the sume of three hundred pounds of like lawful money to be paid to her by my executors hereafter named within three years after my decease.

Item I give and bequeath unto Sheriton Somersfield the somme of One hundred pounds of like money to be paid unto him by my said Executors when his apprenticeship is out.

Item I give and bequeath unto Walter Somerfield the like some of one hundred pounds of like money to be paid unto him by my said executors when his apprenticeship is out.

Item I give and bequeath unto my daughter, the Lady Elizabeth Sadlier, the some of fifty pounds of like money to be paid unto her by my said Executors to buy her mourning.

Item I give and bequeath unto my daughter Margaret Wolding the some of fifty pounds of like money to be paid unto her by my said executors to buy her mourning.

Item I give and bequeath unto all my men servants and maid servants that shall be living within att the tyme of my decease and to each of them the some of five pounds apiece of like money to be paid unto them and every of them by my said executors within one year after my decease.

Item I give and bequeath unto the poor of the Towne of Stretham aforesaid the some of ten pounds of like money to be paid into the hands of the Churchwardens and the Overseers of the said Towne

for the tyme being by my said executors immediately after my decease to be distributed amongst the poor people of the said Towne of Stretham according to their disironds.

Item I give and bequeath unto Henry Linn Esq the some of Twenty pounds of like money to be paid unto him by my said executors within three years after my decease.

And I will that Thomas Powers of Stretham aforesaid shall have the [] and gathering of all such unto as shall be due and payable to my said Grandson Walter Walker, the son of Walter Walker, deceased, my executors hereinafter named as long as he [lives] and thereof to account with my said Grandson my said Executors at his full age And for his pains and [] therein I will and bequeath unto him the said Thomas Powers, yearly and every year during the term of his natural life the sum of twenty pounds of like money per annum to be taken forth of the Moiety of the Manor of Stretham aforesaid all and singular the messuages, lands, tenements and hereditaments [so there] appertaining

And Moreover my will and meaning is that if my said Executors shall make default in payment of any the said severall [distributions,] Annuities or yearly payments and legacies above by me bequeathed or any part of any of them on any of the said severall expressed days or tyme of payment above mentioned That then itt shall and may be lawfull to any for all and any of the said severall and [] Legatees as above mentioned that are upon paid his, her or their Annuities or yearly payments or bargained at the tymes above committed to enter into the said half part or Moeity of the Manor of Stretham aforesaid and all and singular the messuages, lands, Tenements and hereditaments aforesaid with the appurtenances to [authorise] and take thereunto [issue] and [] thereof until they or either of them shall be fully satisfied [] and paid his, her or their Annuities or yearly payment and legacy.

And lastly I do make [solemnly] ordaine and appoint the above named Walter Walker, son of Walter Walker, deceased, my Grandson, sole Executor of this my last will and testament to whome I bequeath all the remainder of my goods and chattels moveable and Immovable after the satisfaction of my debts and payment of the legacies above by me bequeathed

And my very dear friends Henry Linn Esq and Thomas Powers above named I make and ordain Overseers of this my last will and testament requiring them in the name of God to see this my last will and testament formed accordingly

And I do utterly revoke all former wills and testaments by me in any wise heretofore made or declared

In Witness whereof I have hereunto sett my hand and seale the day and year first above written.

Signed, sealed, published and declared
to be the last Will and Testament
of the above names Dame Mary Walker
in the presence of us

Sheffield Stubbs
Mary Boock
the mark of E S Elizabeth Saunders

10 Novr 1692
Probat et Jurto Gualtori Walker
Exorty et Coram me
Guil. Hussey, Surr

13. 4.1760

CRO 1760

Will of **John Walker** of Stretham CAM

In the Name of God Amen, I, **John Walker** of Stretham in the Isle of Ely and the County of Cambridge do make my last will and testament in manner following:

I give all my estate both freehold & copyhold to be sold for payment of my debts and funeral expenses by my Executors hereafter named.

The residue of the money arising from such *sale*, my will & meaning is to be put into four shares, my brother, Wm Walker to have one share, my sister, Jane Walker, one other share & my sister, Ellinor Walker the third share & the fourth share I give to my two Children, Jno Walker & Mary Walker. The money arising from the fourth share, I give to be divided between my two children by my Executors in manner following: John Walker, my son, to have two parts of the money, his sister, Mary Walker, one.

I appoint my Brother Wm Walker; my son, John Walker, and Mr Charles Martindale, Attorney at Law in Cambridge, Executors, of this my last will and to see the money fairly divided according to my meaning whereunto I have sett my hand & seal the day & year first above written.

Signed, sealed, published and declared
by the Testator, John Walker to
be his last will in the presence of us:

Tho. Walker

The word sale interlined before sealing or delivery

as Witness our hand
Tho: Thompson
Edwd: Dimock
John Sennitt

Novr 17, 1761

William Walker, John Walker and Charles Martindale, the three executors above names were sworn in due form of Law before me

Richard Walkerson

(no Invry.)

Appendix 6 : Charities

In the church a table of benefactors dating from 1735 records details of those who have bequeathed money and land for the relief of poverty. It reads:

1553 **Richard Rysley** Rector of Stretham gave his whole estate at Upton near Huntingdon being of the yearly value at that time of £6 10s.0d to be distributed after the following manner: To Christ's College in Cambridge - £3.10s 0d; To the poor of Stretham - £2.0s.0d; To the poor of Bridgham - £1.0s.0d; which estate is now vested in the said College & the present rent now yearly without Fine is £28.0s.0d. of which four thirteenths is due to Stretham.

A divided moiety of 11 acres & an half of land (held by Copy of Thetford Manor) was purchased with the money received for Upton Fine in the year 1715, now let to John Hitch for ye annual rent of £3.10s.0d. The said Richard Rysley beq'eathed likewise to the poor of Stretham, payable by Christ's College at Lady Day annually £0.6s.8d. Gave 4 houses with the right of common to the poor of Stretham by feoffment viz: the Chequer now let for £6.10s.0d & 3 other houses inhabited by the poor with the commons appertaining at £7.10s.0d besides the Smithys shop at 10s. in all per year £14.10s.0d.

1716 **Mrs Martha Digby** beq'eathed to the poor of Stretham her moiety of 4 acres and half and half rood of arable land called Townshend Land & also her moiety of 1 acre and a half of arable copyhold; the profits of which to be distributed yearly 6 days before Easter to six of the poorest widows in Stretham (without lessening any allowance from the parish), which lad is now occupied by Furlow Cobley at per annum of £1.16s.0d. The said Martha Digby beq'eathed likewise 10 acres of arable land, meadow and marish to the poorest housekeepers in Stretham that receive no allowance from the parish the profits to be distributed 6 days before Easter & 6 days before Christmas; which is now let to the widow Hitch at per year £6.0s.0d.

1727 **Lady Effingham Howard** gave to the poor of Stretham fifty pounds, the interest of which to be given yearly to the poor.

This table was erected in MDCCXXXV

So where did the property come from and what has happened to it since.

Richard Rysley

When the Charity Commissioners reported in 1838 some £81 7s 6d was distributed, after payment of taxes & repairs, at the rate of 5s each to the poor who obtained a ticket signed by three of the feofees and received the amount from the treasurer. The Commissioners strongly recommended this system should be abolished & they should apply as much of the funds as needed to supporting and establishing a suitable and proper school.

The Chequers public house was then let by private contract to John Russell. It continued to be a public house and by 1909 was leased to Bailey & Tebbutt. In December 1929 it was in a dilapidated state and was sold to Greene King for £900 which sum included a butchers shop, then part of the pub and some land in Grunty Fen. It continued in trade until 1988 after which it was converted to a private house

They reported that "the smith's shop has been converted into two tenements and are let together with the two cottages to the parish at a yearly rent of £12 5s.0d"

Of the "three other houses inhabited by the poor" the parish "have no documents whatever" reported the commissioners. "The premises are in a tenantable state of repair. Two of the houses are now standing, the third has been down for a considerable time and the site is converted into a garden. The garden on which the house stood is let by private contract to John Sizer, as annual tenant. A garden attached to one of the houses is let to John Dring.

In 1586 Mark Ridley conveyed to the charity the town houses, or Guildhall, then three tenements which had been earlier bought by the late Rector, his father. The rent of 10s. was to be distributed to such poor people as shall be thought to have need. This town house, or Guildhall, would probably have been erected to house the three Stretham Guilds when they were expelled from the church. The precise location of this important building is the subject of speculation but the Charity continued to own property in Chapel Street.

By the 1860s the Chapel Street building, south of Orchard House gate, was being used as a school for the children of the poor but was felt by the Rector to be insufficient. Rev Hugh Pigot offered a yard and barn for separate schools for male and female children and the new school opened in 1872. It was partly funded by Charity money. In 1874 Rysley's charity were "desirous of expending £15 altering the building belonging to the charity formerly used as a Boys School, now disused with the object of converting it into two tenements for the residence of two poor widows or other aged persons" and this subsequently happened.

In 1936 the Charity voted to replace the 4 almshouses behind the cottage and rebuild on another site, but the Charity Commissioners would not sanction the scheme. In 1939 the almshouses were condemned but the RDC allowed them to stand until arrangements could be made. In 1962 the brick and slate cottage in Chapel Street "originally used as a schoolroom with small garden and the range of almshouses now used as outbuildings to the cottage", and of a very poor standard were being let to Mr Butteris at a weekly rent of 10s. The site was valued at £250 and was sold in 1969, the last tenant moving out that February. The property was rebuilt as a private house and the almshouses demolished. It subsequently became the Doctors' surgery.

Rysley's charity also owned property on Top Street which was destroyed in the fire of 1st May 1844. The present cottages were built by Edward Wootton for the total cost of £472.16.11½ on a plot of ground then called Lincoln's Gardens. Extensive renovations took place in 1969 using the money from the sale of the Chapel Street almshouses in addition to a mortgage of £2,442 from Ely RDC. These remain the property of the Stretham Charity Trustees but are not almshouses and are rented at the market rate.

Martha Digby

Martha Digby by her will gave 10 acres of arable land, meadow & marsh grounds to the Rev R. Perkins & others in trust for the poor of Stretham, "requiring them yearly and for ever six days before Easter Day and six days before Christmas day to distribute the profits of the 10 acres to so many of the poorest housekeepers, inhabitants of Stretham, as should not receive any parish relief."

She also left other land, including a plot called Margaret Townsend's land to the trustees requiring them to pay the rents thereof 6 days before Easter and Christmas to six of the poorest widows of Stretham as they should judge best deserving as an augmentation to what they had.

She laid down procedures to ensure that there were always "three substantial trustees", including the rector to administer her bequest, though from time to time there were gaps. By 1837 about 50 people received payments varying from 1s to 4s. & the remainder of the money was distributed twice a year to the poor widows.

Under the Inclosure Act the Commissioners were awarded an allotment of 30a 2r 14p in Starlock & Hay Fen Common in lieu of Digby's & Rysley's lands. These were divided into small allotments for the poor and the rent applied to the general purposes of the charities. Strict rules were drawn up to govern the use of the land. The rent was to be 12s. per rood, paid quarterly and if the tenant got in arrears the allotment was declared vacant & the crops forfeited. They were to be "cultivated solely by spade husbandry and to be cropped with corn, vegetables or fruit". Not more than half a rood was to be planted with potatoes & two cart loads of manure were to be applied annually. No work was to be done by the tenant after 6 o'clock in the morning or before 6 in the evening without the consent of his employer.

The most draconian rule was the one that read: "Any persons convicted of theft, of deserting his wife and family or of any other offences against the laws of the country to be immediately deprived of his allotment without remuneration for labour or planting or for the value of the crop thereon".

The allotments continue to be administered by the Charity Trustees, though they no longer enforce the original rules. Despite this the number of plots under cultivation by individuals continue to decline and some land is let in blocks for agricultural use.

After the widows' money & rates had been paid the remainder was given away in coal & clothing. In 1913 there were 146 recipients of various charities & a donation of £2 given yearly to Addenbrooke's Hospital. A

sum of £25 was allotted yearly from the Digby charity to scholars for regular attendance, a custom which continued until 1968.

Lady Effingham Howard

In 1727 Lady Howard left £50, the interest of which was to be given away to the poor. By 1838 the money had been mixed up with other funds of the charities and applied in the same manner

The administration of the funds of the charities was undertaken by the Rector and various people appointed under the terms of the will. When in 1896 the Parish Council came into being members of that newly established body were elected as Trustees in the place of the Churchwardens. They found the charities had been economically managed and there were no abuses.

The 1913 scheme

In March 1913 the schoolroom was full to overflowing when a member of the Charity Commissioners attended to explain their new scheme for the administration of village charities. It provided for the payment of subscriptions in aid of any dispensary, infirmary, hospital or convalescent home and of the travelling expenses of patients visiting them. It also allowed for the provision of nurses, midwives & medical aid. Villagers felt that it would reduce the amount of money available for distribution to the poor. The meeting became very rowdy and ended by rejecting the new scheme. It was nonetheless put into operation and used until replaced in 1999.

The 1999 scheme

The new scheme administers the various charities as one and allows the income to be spent on the promotion of education, relief of people in hardship – including widows - and grants to other charitable institutions for the benefit of such people. It continues to be spent along the lines envisaged by the donors of so many centuries ago.

Appendix 7 : extracts from William Cole's notes on Stretham, edited by Mike Petty

1748

"This is a fine large church, with a square tower at the west end in which hang 4 bells and a clock : on the tower is a fine spire of stone. The nave is large and spacious, and a north isle and chapel at the east end of it; and beyond that a fine large chapel built about 150 years ago, as it seems by the building which is of stone; a chancel and part of a south transept isle and south porch, all of which are leaded and in good repair.

The altar is on two steps and railed in. Just under it in the middle lies an old free-stone, much worn by the (feet of the) officiating priest at the altar, and on it is this inscription 'Hic jacet Johes Parker ... obit 26 May 1592

Close to this lies on the north side a handsome black marble slab with arms at top. Beneath is this inscription: 'Hic jacet Henricus Brunsell, LL.D., Praebendarius Ecclesiae Eliensis et Rector de Stretham. Obit 23 Feb 1678'.

On the E wall on the S. side of the altar is a good neat mural monument of white marble with the arms of Brunsell impaling Wren, viz: a chevron inter 3 lions heads erased & on a chief 3 cross corslets: underneath on a table of black marble is this inscription Anna Filia Xtof: Wren Dec: Windsor Uxor Hen: Brunsell L.L.D. [rest not transcribed, it still remains in church] ('Ann, daughter of Chrstofer Wren, Dean of Windsor, wife of Dr Brunsell, Died Feb 1667')

On the E wall on the N side of the altar hangs a sort of achievement with these arms in a lozenge. Under it is wrote : Rachal Barry obiit ix May 1673 ae 33 [Cole includes a sketch]

At the foot of the steps, exactly in the middle, lies a fine large old grey marble disrobed of a canopy of 3 arches in Brass; but a curious large figure of a woman with her hands in a praying posture & in the dress of the times in brass & well preserved.

Just at the bottom of the steps of the altar in N. wall is an arch and under it a raised tomb, covered with very old grey marble, with a bust of a person, which if ever there was any brass it is gone & this old French inscription cut in the marble all round it: 'Nicol de Kyngstone, lies here, God on his soul have mercy, Amen' This person probably was founder or builder of the chancel and rector of the parish: at the head of this under another arch in S (?) wall now stopped up is another raised tomb which has a raised cross on the grey marble but if there is any inscription it is so covered by the pews beside it that nothing is to be seen of it: this last is a coffin stone.

Near this place lyeth buried the Body of the Lady Mary Walker widow & relict of Sr Walter Walker knt. Dr of Lawes who was the eldest daughter of George Lynn of Southwick in the county of Northampton Esq. She died the 6 Day of November 1698 aged 77 years. And on a free stone below close to the old French monument is this also added : Here lyeth the Lady Walker. Sr Walter Walker Dr of Laws was one of the Judges of the Court of Admiralty and of the Court for the Probate of Wills

The nave is separated from the chancel by a screen; the old pulpit stands against first of the four pillars on the north side, the old stone font against the last in the same side. The roof of the nave, which is very broad and spacious is supported in the middle by four wooden pillars for security. The said roof is exceedingly handsome and carved, and about it are four coats of arms supported by angels.

At the east end of the N. isle, is built an exceeding handsome & elegant chapel of freestone & very large, finely roofed & leaded & well carved. The entrance from the N. isle or chapel into it is by the three handsome arches with two beautiful stone pillars and closed with a large screen of wood, over which is inscribed in large capital letters this inscription: 'We that live and are remaining at the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep'. By which words, I suppose, it was erected by some of the Sandy's family who lived here and at Wilburton, for a burial place for their family. It is now in great squalidness and used for any rubbish and to run lead in for leading the church. Ab ye East end, by the N corner is fixed a good handsome monument of alabaster, but now much broken and defaced: there are the figures of two ladies at their devotions on their knees in small & the clerk told me that lately there was a third figure which was

stolen: I suppose the husband of the said ladies: the large coat of arms, wh was at top is now pulled down & I could perceive that there had been other arms, which are now lost

On a black marble tablet under on of the ladies is wrote the following inscription in letters of gold: the other tablet is plain & at the bottom is the larger inscription on black marble & gold letters.

“This monument sacred to the memory of Mary Thornhurst daughter to Sr Stephen Thornehurst knight (a gentlewoman of rare piety & beauty) was erected by her affectionate husband Thomas Sandys Esq. in St Gregories church adjoining to St Pauls (ye earth yet preserves her dust) & at ye pulling down of the same transported to this place, where his second wife lies interred. She dyed without issue in the flower of her youth the last of July 1598”

“This earth is entrusted with the bodie of Margaret Tyas, daughter to Robert Tyas esq (descended from the anient Barons of that name) & shall restore it in perfection to receive the reward of piety & virtue at the general summons: the second wife of Thomas Sandys esq., who gave him 7 sons and 3 daughters; of these 5 survived, by her imbewed in their infancy with meekness, sincerity and devotion whereof still they reeine the sweetse savoure thereof unrepoveable conversation & no meane learning A fair example of singular modesty, conjugal love & well remembered affection, who died 25 of July 1626 & yet liveth in ye heart of her grateful husband to whose memory he hath engraven this inscription” There are 2 or 3 words scratched out by design [Cole includes a sketch of the monument]

Over the altar is a table of benefactors put up by the present Rector the Rev Mr Thomas & is thus: 1553 Richard Rysley ...erected M.DCCXXXV [transcribes board in church]

“The Rectory is a very good and large House & stands just without the churchyard on the S. side: there seems to have been a great deal of very old stone Building: a little part of which still remains at the N. end of the house, with good arched cellars below. Mr Thomas showed me some old painted glass which came out of the windows before they were pulled down, in this house, in which they have a notion that John of Gaunt sometime lived: the glass is of a curious form and seems to have been the top part of a gothic window & has the arms of King Edward III in the middle surrounded with 4 rays of the arms of France B. semee de Fleurs de Lis. There were also 2 or 3 round pieces of red glass with the Lion of England there on [Cole includes sketches of the glass]

Just without side of the church yard at the East end in the street stands a very neat & elegant cross of stone on a freese of five steps the shaft being terminated at top with 4 small niches; & the whole quite perfect [Cole includes a sketch]

Extract of a letter from a friend of mine, who had been at Haddenham to look over my estate & order such repairs as were wanting, dated Mar 15.1758. “On my return I found a sale of Mr Walker’s estate at Soham by Auction in 4 lots, who of which were purchased for Ld Hardwick before I left the place; & I imagine he has bough the whole amounting to 500L per Annm

The Rev James Brown, MA, Master of Pembroke Hall is presented by his Majesty to the Rectory of Stretham in the King’s gift for his turn – Cambridge Chronicle Sat Feb 12 1771. On 9 Oct 1771 Mr Brown was created D.D. by Dr Gordon, who officiated as professor of Divinity for Dr Rutherford, who was then actually dead, but who had requested this favour of Dr Gordon before he left Cambridge. What was the more extraordinary, Dr Gordon was then, with Mr Professor Watson of Trinity College, a candidate to succeed him, & was to have preached the clerum at St Mary’s for him as this day: but that was not performed as the University was assured of his death. Could Dr Gordon officiate as professor in conferring degree for the same reason?

At the west end, over the gallery lately built for the singers, at the 2 extremities of the fine wrought beam, are these 2 coats of arms which I did not observe the first time I was in this church [includes sketches]

v. Dr Stukeley’s Itinerarium curiosum p.12

Mr Charles Thomas, educated in Bene’t college, Rector, died a bachelor in the Rectorial House, where had had been conveyed ... on Sunday evening Jan 13 1771 & was buried in the chancel, desiring no other

person's gravestone might be disturbed for him. He was a man of parts, but of an odd and whimsical disposition, as many parts of his will evidenced.

Mr Alderman Bentham dining with me, together with his wife, at Milton the day Mr Thomas died, told me of his dying condition, & altho' his bro: James Bentham made interest to get the living, yet advised me to try what I could do for it: which I should not have thought of but that mt Lord Montfort sending his servant over to me next day with a haunch of venison, in my letter of thanks, I just mentioned it to him, but in the most slight manner. However his Lordship wrote that night or on Tuesday to the Duke of Grafton & Lord North, Secretary of State, representing my unfortunate situation in having my estate for the last 5 or 6 years almost totally under water. But I was too late: the Bp of Peterborough sending an appeal to the Duke who got it for the new Master of Pembroke Hall, Mr Browne

Calling here in my way from Ely with Mr Tyson of Bene't college, May 6 1769 I observed another old coffin stone raised as high as the former, at the head of the Nicholas de Kyngstone monument: but as it was covered by a bench & part of the stalls before it, I could not make other of it than described here, which Mr Tyson drew out: tho' I am apt to doubt whether that is the true figure; it resembling nothing of the sort I ever met with before. It was probably designed for a cross stone

In 1779 the church being new roofed & other repairs done to it, Mr Essex of Cambridge had the overlooking of it; he took notice of a 3rd old grave stone in the north chapel under the south wall with only a cross bolony (?) at the upper end of it, as below (sketch). Query whether it had not a shaft or pole to connect it with the cross?

Visitation by Bp Green. Stretham Rectory £200 p.a. Bp of Ely. Patron. Mr Thomas, rector. Mr John Hempsted curate, salary £50. He resides in the Parsonage House. The house very large, some part very good: the out-houses very sorry. An Anabaptist meeting house. Some lands left for the benefit of the poor

Appendix 8 : William Merry

Extract from "Rural Sports" by W.B. Daniels, 1807

It is almost needless to premise that the Fens are (or rather *were*, for I refer back to *thirty years*) vast tracts of Morass, covered with Water, and very shallow, except in the Drains, or some particular places; they abound in fish such as *Pike, Perch, Tench, Roach, Bream, & Eels*; *Reeds* and *Flags* grow almost universally throughout the Fens, and yield Shelter to a great variety of *Water-fowl*. The Reeds are a sort of Harvest to the neighbouring Inhabitants, who mow them *annually*: they prove a much more durable Thatch than Straw, and not only *Cottages*, but very good Houses are covered with them. *Stares* or *Starlings*, which, during the *Winter*, resort in Myriads to roost in the Reeds, are so very destructive in breaking them down, by the vast numbers that perch upon them, that a reed bed has been damaged to upwards of an *hundred pounds* in *one* Night: the people are therefore very diligent in driving them away; in their attempts to do so are at great expense in Ammunition to free themselves of these troublesome Guests. Stocks of *Reeds* properly harvested and stacked, are often, to a *Fen-farmer*, worth *three hundred pounds*.

The birds inhabiting the different *Fens* are extremely numerous ... Should any *Cambridge Man*, who was a *Fen Shooter* *Thirty years* ago, honour this Book with his perusal, he will not wonder at seeing the Name of **Old Merry**, of *Stretham Ferry* mentioned as a truly *scientific* Conductor of this kind of Sporting.

In his Knowledge of the *Haunts* of the different Species of birds which visited the Fens, he was most precise; and in the Navigation of his *Punt* (a small boat) along the *ditches*, which are in fact the only Roads through the Fens, his judgement and assiduity were alike conspicuous; he knew if a Drought had lowered the Water where he could make good his point; and frequently, whilst Shooting parties with other Guides were wearying themselves with *towing*, or from the noise occasioned by being *towed* all the birds in the vicinity were disturbed, *Old Merry* was steering his *Punt* silently to the scene of the Action; and in the *Fogs*, which are so thick as to exclude objects at the smallest distances, on in the Dark, he was equally collected, and knew how to proceed in the Morning or return at Night, in spite of all Obstacles.

As a *Marksman* he was extraordinarily expert; with a Gun upwards of *six feet* in the *barrel*, and that placed in its Stock by the *Village Carpenter* and altogether of a Weight which nothing but a most powerful Arm could extend and elevate, would he kill a *Snipe* flying. Before exhibiting this proof of dexterity, he usually requested to be supplied with a fresh Cartridge, in lieu of what he threw away (as he termed it) after so worthless a bird: the charge of this *Demi-culverin* was *two pipes and a half of powder*, and *three* of shot, and the *wadding* was a little *dry sedge*, of which he always took a wisp in the *Punt*.

At *Wild-Fowl*, either single or in *Trips*, he was a fatal shot; from long habit his Eye and Ear were both singularly keen at the approach of Wild-Fowl in their flight, and his Gun generally verified the truth of his observation, when fired at them in the *twilight*, or in the *fogs*; and for the most part his Caution to look out at the coming of the birds was so exact, that no person could well complain of want of shots, if they obeyed his Directions; his knowledge (either from the Wind, or some other cause) in seeing the *wild-fowl* fly, to what particular spot they would direct their Course, was accurate, and his *Punt* was certain to be either in a Direction to intercept them in their Flight, or to be concealed among the Reeds close to where they assembled to feed at Eve or Morning

Old Merry had not been much troubled with Education; as rude as the Country in which his occupation lay, he possessed, perhaps like *that*, Materials which would have received and well requited the labour of Cultivation; he had an innate Civility, and evenness of Temper, which very few could ruffle, always preserving the most unassuming Behaviour; and, whilst reciting a fund of *Fen-shooting* Anecdotes, was ever indefatigable in procuring Amusement for his Employers.

One Circumstance happened in the Course of our shooting acquaintance, which, however it may evince *Old Merry's* attachment to his Dog might have been attended with serious Consequences. This favourite Dog was of the old *English water-spaniel* kind, and constantly went with his Master, to whom he used to bring *Coots* and *Wild-ducks* when *moulting*, or the young *flappers*, in astonishing quantities. One afternoon the Dog

shewed symptoms of being unwell, refused the Food offered him, and took no notice of the Birds as usual, and scarcely roused himself at the discharge of the Guns. Upon our return, the Dog was at one end of the Punt, and the Howl it almost incessantly uttered, added to the Darkness of the Evening, and the reflections upon the Cause by which they Howlings were produced, rendered it as unpleasant a Voyage as ever was made; for Merry had no doubt but that the Dog was *going mad*, and meant to secure some famous never-failing Remedy so soon as he got him home; the Dog, however, frustrated his intention, for when landed at the House he directly set off, and what became of him was never discovered.

For the *Summer Fen-shooting* nothing was necessary but two Guns, one with a *long* and the other a *short* barrel, a pair of Boots made to resist the Water, and which were to be had of excellent leather from the Shoemakers in the Neighbourhood

Appendix 9 : Stretham Engine and other drainage, by Mike Petty.

Fenland is like a saucer, high round the outside and low in the middle. Water runs down the edge of the saucer to the bottom, which is the fen. At the bottom of the saucer, like lumps of sugar are the fen islands, standing high above the wetlands. Of these the biggest Island is the Island of Ely on which Stretham village is located.

Water that falls on the highlands to the south of Cambridge drains out to sea via two main natural rivers, the River Cam and the River Ouse. The Cam and the Ouse join at Pope's Corner, just north of Stretham, now better known as the site of the Fish & Duck pub which was established there in about 1820 [SN150].

That section of the Ouse that runs from Earith to Pope's Corner is known as the Old West River. As its name suggests this River once ran west, taking its water not to the Cam but to a river known as the West Water which ran north from Earith. It was subsequently engineered to run in its present course during the myriad changes in waterways that have occurred throughout the centuries.

In the 1600s major drainage by the Earl of Bedford and his associates resulted in the construction of first one and then two new Bedford Rivers running from Earith to the sea, joining the River Ouse at Denver. One aspect of the scheme was that the Ouse sluiced at Denver which greatly reduced the amount of water coming down the river, though drainers were obliged to maintain the navigation of barges to Cambridge.

The drainage stipulation did not apply to the Old West which was sluiced at Earith. The mass of water that formerly came along the Old West was instead sent down the Bedford Rivers.

The junction of the Cam and the Old West encloses a narrow triangular shaped piece of low-lying ground. Inevitably rivers would overflow into it and water accumulated which could not easily get away again. In this area grew up a large shallow lake, called Stretham Mere, which is shown on the earliest county maps, from 1576 and was probably there for centuries before.

This mere ground provided rich fishing and continued to be covered with water until the commons were inclosed by Sir Miles Sandys about 1607. At the same sort of time work was also underway on drainage of the larger Soham Mere. Subsequently the land supported cattle and sheep during the summer months, but it was always liable to inundation with no natural means of drainage.

Drainage within the local area had formerly been undertaken by the monasteries and subsequently by Commissioners of Sewers who had been established in the 1530s. They had strongly resisted the large-scale drainage works of the 1630s and found that these did not solve all their problems.

The great drainage enterprise of the 1630s and 1640s had the effect of diverting the main volume of water away from the Old West and reducing the times when the banks would be threatened with overtopping. However in 1725 the great sluice at Denver collapsed. Water coming down the Bedford Rivers ran up into the Ouse causing extensive flooding. It was 1750 before the sluice was rebuilt. Some argued that if the Hermitage sluice at Earith had been opened and the water allowed to flow along the Old West River some of the difficulties might have been resolved.

One consequence of drainage was that as land which had formerly been wet dried out, so the level of the land dropped. The height of water in the rivers remained constant, and banks had to be built either side of the river channels to stop the water overflowing on to the fields alongside. Ditches still needed to be dug around the fields to allow some of the water to drain away but there was nowhere for it to go except up into the rivers, and water does not flow uphill.

In 1726 landowners at Haddenham combined to obtain an Act of Parliament to establish an internal drainage district with powers to raise taxes to erect mills to drain their part of the fen. The use of wind pumps to drain individual fields had been pioneered in Over by 1604.

Landowners in Waterbeach petitioned Parliament for their own drainage authority for their district in 1728, but the Bill was never read. This may have been because the Bedford Level Corporation, the body responsible for the main rivers, spent money on repairs to the banks of the Cam. Certainly the Old West could not have

been a problem since Badeslade, in his report on drainage and navigation published in 1725, refers to it as a "streamlet". Bargees complained that there was insufficient water to sail their boats, forcing them, if they were trading from Cambridge to St Ives, to travel down to Denver and back along the New Bedford River. (This loss of river trade may have had an impact on the commercial development of Stretham. There is a ditch running along the east side of Green End that could once have been wide enough to be a lode carrying barge traffic down to the present allotment area. Certainly another ditch ran back to the river where a windmill pumped water up into the Old West. [For further details see Beth Davis' paper])

In 1741 the Waterbeach landowners were successful in obtaining their Waterbeach Level Act which provided for the drainage of 4,500 acres. Subsequent acts were passed in 1766, 1790, 1797 and 1813. It established a body of commissioners from those who owned 100 acres in Waterbeach or 60 acres in Stretham. Meetings were to be held at Stretham Ferry, though they preferred other meeting places, including the Chequers and Red Lion.

The Waterbeach Level comprises parts of the parishes of Waterbeach, Wicken, Lt Thetford & Stretham. and the land was principally used for pasture. Initially two windpumps were erected, Mere Mill near the site of the current steam engine, where an ancient drain came from the Mere into the river, Dowload Mill near the Fish & Duck. A third, Upper Mill, near Stretham Ferry had been built by 1775. All pumped water into the Old West river. The situation was summarised by C.N. Cole in his report on the South Level in 1777 which also spoke of the "fair bridge" built across the Old West by Sir Charles Gould, the "Wooden Bridge". "The Act for draining the commons is one of the few District Acts that have answered the end proposed & the commons are increased one fourth in value", Cole noted.

Yet another Cole, the antiquarian William Cole, who was a landowner in the district complained in 1770 of the flooding of his land for the third time in six years. By 1794 only 500 acres of the fen was under casual cultivation and this fell to 100 acres within a few years. The Commissioners sought powers to raise higher rates and to levy tolls upon people using the river banks as hailing ways.

By now the level of shrinkage had increased and in 1814 another mill was erected behind Dowload to cope with the additional lift. Two private mills had also been erected. Such mills were expensive to maintain and increasingly proving ineffectual.

There were floods in 1795 when land north of the Old West went under water & elsewhere 25,000 acres in the Downham and Littleport district were flooded six feet deep. Four years later came more extensive floods around Bottisham, Fordham and Burwell while water in the Littleport district was 3½ feet deep and laid for twelve months in that state. The situation was being exasperated by inclosure in the upland parishes, which improved their drainage system. Water flowed off their lands and into the river faster than previously, adding to the problems downstream. Meanwhile the fenland rivers were becoming choked by the mud puddled up by the drainage mills. In 1809, 150,000 acres were flooded and at Ely "the banks gave way in most directions and inundated 60,000 acres six feet deep, involving houses, cattle, stacks and everything in one general ruin".

One solution to the problem was felt to be a new Eau Brink Cut near King's Lynn which would enable water to escape to sea more quickly. It was an expensive scheme but hailed as a success in 1821, by 1824 the floods were back. The river between Ely and Littleport Bridge was straightened in 1827, the sluices at Hermitage and Salter's Lode were rebuilt but something else was needed.

In 1819 the first Steam pump was erected on the Ten Mile River bank. Steam power was a great improvement over the fickle pumps that would only work when the wind blew. "These fens have oft times been by water drown'd, Science a remedy in water found. The powers of steam shall be employ'd, And the Destroyer by itself destroyed" triumphed William Harrison, the fenland drainer-poet.

The Waterbeach Level had sought advice from John Rennie in 1813, and he had recommended the installation of a steam engine at the junction of the Ouse and Cam and the construction of additional drains and ditches. But the cost of £15,000 was too high to be contemplated. In 1829 Joseph Glynn, a civil engineer who had by then installed a number of such machines, was instructed to advise about the installation of a steam engine for the Waterbeach Commissioners.

Tenders were invited in June 1831 that of the Butterley Company for the erection of an engine at a cost of £2,900 was accepted. The building to house the engine was constructed by Mr Briggs of West Ferry, Lincolnshire for an additional £2,050. By November that year it was up and running.

Tenders were invited for the mechanical parts of the engine and on 29 June 1831 the contract for the engine including the boilers and scoop-wheel was awarded to Mr Glynn who agreed to build a steam Beam engine at the sum of £2,900. A month later Mr. Briggs of West Ferry in Lincolnshire was given the job of building the Engine House for £2,050. The work was finished by November 1831. Briggs built the engine house, coal yard and a house for the engineer, though this was replaced in 1902 by the existing building

With the construction of the engine two of the drainage windmills were dismantled and sold, though the Mere Mill near the engine was retained and used occasionally until 1840, when the bricks of the base and culvert were needed to build the house for the stoker.

The scoopwheel was the usual form of pump for draining the fens. It had no valves to become clogged with weeds or mud and was quite adequate for raising the water the 3 or 4 ft. which was the average lift from the land drains to the level of the rivers. The wheel runs in a narrow masonry track preventing the water escaping between the paddles and the side. It had to be a very accurate piece of construction and dependent on very firm foundations, which were driven down on a bed of hard gravel which only 10 feet below the peat surface.

As drainage continued, so the fen shrank further. The scoop paddles were lengthened in 1850 and further changes were needed from time to time. By 1892 parts of the gears had become seriously worn and in 1896 the scoopwheel was replaced with a new one that could be lowered an additional 18 inches when required. In addition a rising breast was installed to assist in discharging water when the river was particularly full. The new wheel was sent by rail to Ely where it was unloaded and brought by barge down to the engine. It proved a very wet autumn and while the engine was out of action water rose steadily in the drains as engineers worked long into the night.

The power to turn the wheel comes from a low pressure condensing beam engine. To start the engine it was first turned into the starting position by using a pole until the crank was nearly horizontal. Steam was admitted by the inlet control and a vacuum created. The engine was then driven forward by opening the appropriate inlet valve with the starting handle. This rocked the engine to dead centre the other side and was quickly driven back by reversing the handle. In this way it was rocked backwards and forwards until sufficient momentum was gained to allow it to make a complete revolution. As soon as this was done the gab lever was thrust forwards, a notch in the eccentric rod fell into a pin at the base of the starting handle and the valve action became automatically operated by the engine. The starting handle was then used to work the engine up to its running speed. Now it is all done using an electric drive connected to the scoop wheel.

The steam which provided the power was generated initially by two boilers which were increased to three in 1846. They had to be replaced in 1871 and 1878. The boilers always required regular maintenance and attention and at least twice a year they had to have the scale chipped by a man going into them and working inside the gloomy, cramped and dripping space of the boiler working by the light of a foul-smelling tallow candle.

The boilers ran on coal transported by barge and trundled into the coal yard where it was weighed. The weighing machine still survives. Consumption varied but was always around 5 tons for 24 hours running with 10-12 cwt to get up steam.

From May 1839 to May 1925, when the engine stopped regular working, it ran for 66,000 hours. The main period of pumping took place during the winter months when it would be worked as necessary, usually starting at 6.30 am but running all night if necessary. The longest period of continuous running was in the flood of 1919 when it operated for 40 days and nights. It ran for the last time on 11th March 1941.

Since the engine had to be monitored and adjusted constantly when working it demanded not only great endurance on behalf of the engineers and stokers but also a vast amount of technical skill. Patterns for spare parts were maintained and manufactured either by the Board's engineers or village blacksmith. The engineers became part of the elite of the community and the engine itself was almost their private world, closed off to all but a very privileged few. The Superintendents who operated the steam engine were E. Stanley, 1831-1880, J. Walters 1880-1884, I. Houseley 1884-1930 and E. Stevens 1931-1943. He was succeeded by C.O. Clarke, Sid Proud & Owen Jakes, though by now the job has changed considerably.

After the First World War the steam boilers were almost worn out and it was agreed to install a diesel engine and retain the beam engine just for emergencies. The engine was made by Messrs Mirrlees, Bickerton & Day of Stockport and is coupled to a Gwynnes centrifugal pump. Although quicker and easier to start than the steam engine it was still a skilled task and still needed constant monitoring. During the 1937 floods it worked for a total of 1,853 hours, 590 hours without a stop. Ten years later during the next floods it ran continuously from 14th to 19th March, 354 hours continuously. During this the bank burst near Lt Thetford flooding the allotments and cutting the Newmarket Road, while the A10 near Chittering was cut by a combination of this water and other flooding which swept across the fen from a breach at Over.

By then however the water was no longer flowing freely towards the pump due to continued peat shrinkage – whilst the engine was standing high on its gravel base. It was decided to erect two other diesel engines to pump water from the Waterbeach Level and discharge, not into the Old West, but into the Cam. These new engines came into use in 1946 and have themselves subsequently been updated. Electric pumps are now installed which automatically monitor the water levels and operate when needed – provided the electricity supply is not cut in any future flood.

Sid Proud in his journal for 1979 recorded how over the previous two years two new pumps had been installed using the Board's own labour. "With the Cam electric engine operating the Level is now into the late twentieth century completely, with drainage. We are far more efficient than we were. Life is much easier"

He still logged early starts and late nights when the occasion demanded it, part of the constant work needed to ensure that the agricultural land remains dry in winter. But there is another side to the work, for the farmers who pay their drainage rates also need water to irrigate their crops during the growing season when the dykes need to be kept as full as possible. But with the changing climate and the continuing demand for water for domestic purposes farmers are now being forbidden to take water from the rivers for irrigation.

The fens are not now too wet, they are too dry. So having spent hundreds of years and thousands of pounds on draining the land farmers, are now having to spend thousands of pounds flooding it again, constructing reservoirs to save water during the winter to use in the spring. One of the largest of these is just off the Newmarket Road.

However the danger of flooding cannot be eliminated. It need only take one breach in one bank to cause a catastrophe as in 1947, yet nowadays the maintenance and regulation of the banks which just a generation ago was seen as essential is now largely overlooked. Only when the water is at the top of the bank will the impact of any mole hole or rat hole be appreciated. Yet drainage does not just involve big rivers, the little ditches that carry water through the village can also overflow, as was seen in the Wilburton Road area after the construction of the bypass and the piping of a ditch. It is only when the rains come and the water accumulates that the importance of effective drainage is appreciated. Although the majority of Stretham is on an island the houses at the bottom of the hill are still vulnerable.

The Stretham Old Engine is now administered by the Stretham Engine Trust which was established in 1957 and maintains and preserves the engines and site with the aid of donations and income from visitors. They have undertaken considerable renovations and installed the electric drive which gives visitors a chance to appreciate the importance of this, the last of the great steam fen drainage engines.

Acknowledgements to : E.J.A. Kenny "The steam pumping engine at Stretham", 1963; K.S.G. Hinde, "A description of Stretham old engine", 1986; C.O.Clarke "The Stretham diesel engine", 1974; K.S.G. Hinde & J.R. Stubbings "Waterbeach Level 1740-1990, 1991.

Appendix 10 : Stretham Inclosure

Until inclosure the open fields around Stretham were divided up into strips with each tenant being allotted strips, widely spaced from each other. The fields were named Crouch Field (East & West of Ely Rd), Whitecross and Brook Fields (North & South of Wilburton Rd) & Meadow Field (East of Cambridge Road). There were also open commons and fens. Snoot common, Middle common, Elford Closes, Chear Fen & Lazier Fen lay at the extreme south of the parish and Starlock Hay Fen common and Holt Fen in the South East.

By 1833 there was pressure for these to be inclosed - exchanged for blocks of land which would be easier to farm using machinery. To do this an Act of Parliament was necessary. That such developments were not welcomed by every-body as was demonstrated at Lt Thetford where a group of villagers prevented the official notice being fixed to the church doors – even fighting off a contingent of police sent to enforce this essential first stage in the process. Flushed with their success the residents tried next day, Sunday, to stop Baber entering the church chanting ‘No church today’. But the Rector persisted and entered the building, taking with him his warden, who was one of the protestors.

In Stretham the Rector was one of those initiating the Inclosure process. Other leading landowners involved were George Gould Morgan, Lord of the Manor, William Edwards Read, Thomas Waddelow Granger, Feofees of Parson's Charity, Feofees of Stretham, William Wright, William Blinch, Thomas Archer.

The Inclosure Act for Stretham was passed in 1835 but the procedure dragged on for two years. People had needed to register their claims, roads had been set out and some previous tracks closed off, fences had to be erected around public areas, and once plots were allocated the new owners needed to fence their new fields. To many this final cost of fencing may have been prohibitive. Henry Baber, as Rector, was allocated lands in lieu of tithes - payment from other farmers towards church costs - and his lands were to be fenced at public expense.

The process enclosed the open fields measuring 2,390 acres approximately half the total parish area.

Unlike many parishes Stretham had the benefit of charity allotments, ensuring that nobody need be completely deprived of a means of growing his own food – though restrictions applied and if a man deserted his wife and family, he was expelled from his allotment.

Those who obtained the largest shares were William Edwards Read of Orchard House (228 acres), George Gould Morgan, lord of the Manor (173 acres), Thomas Waddelow Granger (142 acres) & the Ely Feofees (135 acres); the remaining land was spread evenly. Some of Richard Rysley charity lands were replaced by an allotment of 30½ acres in Starlock Hay Fen Common for the benefit of the school. Many other individuals were named on the Inclosure Award

The Commissioners were John Josselyn of Sproughton Suffolk & Anthony Jackson of Barkway Herts. & the Surveyor was Alexander Watford.

As well as allotting lands the Commissioners also set out various roads and drains

Private Carriage Roads. Stopped up or discontinued roads

- 1 Leaves Ely Road at Grunty Fen Baulk north along the Baulk to Grunty Fen 30 feet wide
- 2 Ely Road at Mill Way west to the mill belonging R. T. Camps and then to an allotment in White Cross field 30 feet wide
- 3 Starts at the common gate goes east and south east over Starlock and Hay Fen Commons nearly in its present track to the Old West river near the gravel ford 30 feet wide
- 4 Leaves Private Road No 3 opposite plot No 336 south-east over Starlock Common to the bridge over the Old West. 30 feet wide
- 5 North end of Wrights Lane east over Berry Green Hill to Wood Lane. 30 feet wide

- 6 Leaving Cambridge Road at south west corner of an orchard and east to Starlock Common. 20 feet wide
- 7 From Private Road No 4 at Meadow Hedges and south west to Cambridge Road at Field Gate. 30 feet wide
- 8 Cambridge Road at the Old West river bank and goes east and south east over Cheer Fen. 30 feet wide
- 9 Cambridge Road opposite Snoot Bridge west to bridge and. north beside Haddenham Level Drain. 20 feet wide
- 10 Wilburton Road south and west to 30 feet beyond north east corner of an ancient inclosure belonging Wm Martin. 20 feet wide
- 11 Cambridge Road at north end of village, west to the Pound at the north end of Back Lane. 20 feet wide
- 12 From 3rd Private Road north east to Brook Lane. 30 feet wide
- 13 From 3rd Private Road at east side of 2nd watering Place, north across 3rd public drain to Old Inclosure No 110. 20 feet wide
- 14 From end of Private Road through Old Inclosure 279 north east over Holt Fen. 30 feet wide
- 15 From Gravel Ford south east to 14th Private Road. 30 feet wide

Alloted to Surveyors of Highways.

- 1 A piece containing 12 perches bounded on the north east by allotment to Feoffees of Ely, on the south by Old Inclosure of Edward Tingey Granger, on the west by Ely Turnpike Road and one other piece in Starlock and Hay Fen Commons containing 12 perches, these are for Public Watering Pits to be used to water horses & cattle.

Maintenance of Private Roads

- 1st To be kept in repair the first three chains from Ely Road by devisees of E. T. Granger or current owner of that land. After that four chains by W. E. Read or owner of that land and remainder of that road by Feoffees of Ely.
- 2nd For eighteen chains from Ely Road to be repaired by owners on either side as far as the crown of the road, then for nine chains by R. T. Camps or current owner and remainder by owners on either side of the road.
- 3rd From the Gravel Ford until it crosses the 2nd Public Drain, by owners on either side
- 4th For 10 chains from bridge over the Old West to be repaired by G. G. Morgan or current owner, then for five chains by Russell Blinch or current owner and for five chains by Geo Hall and remainder by owners of either side.
- 5th By G. G. Morgan.
- 6th For five chains starting at allotment owned by Robert Gibbon's to be kept in repair by John Lutt, remainder by Wm Langford.
- 7th By owners on either side.
- 8th For twelve chains from Cambridge Road by Wm Spalding remainder by owners on either side.
- 9th Four and a half chains from Cambridge Road by T. W. Granger and then for four and a half chains by Thomas Hall and remainder by the rector.
- 10th For nine chains from the end adjoining allotment of Fred Clay to be repaired by him then for eight chains by Wm Camps and the remainder by the rector.
- 11th By the rector and G. G. Morgan.
- 12th/13th To be repaired by Surveyors of the Highway of Stretham also part of 3.
- 14th For seven chains from south west end by G. G. Morgan then for thirteen chains by W.E. Read., remainder by owners on either side.
- 15th By W. E. Read.

Footpaths, Carriageways and Bridleways.

- 1 Footpath from Meadow Footbridge south across Meadow Field to Middle Common.
- 2 Carriageway starting Dead Lane Close and proceeding south west and south to Bread Baulk.
- 3 Carriageway from Cambridge Road opposite Grunty Fen Baulk south, going along Brook Lane to Berry Green.
- 4 Bridleway from Snoot Bridge, south over Snoot and Lazier Commons to south west corner of Lazier Fen where White Mill formerly stood.
- 5 Carriageway called Red Hill Way from Cambridge Road at north side of Long Furlong in Meadow Field and going west and south along Nettle Bush Furlong and Red Hill to Watlode Close Gate and then north to east corner Old Inclosure belonging Wm Martin.
- 6 Carriageway from Cambridge Road near the Mill House and west to the boundary of Wilburton and Stretham.
- 7 Bridleway from Private Road No 2 at Wm Camps Mill and going west and north to White Cross Way.
- 8 Carriageway starting at 2nd Private Road near Camps Mill and going north to Grunty Fen.
- 9 Carriageway starting at Old West river Gravel Ford going east and south to the bank of river Cam at Dimocks Cote.

Public Drains

- 1 West end of a tunnel at the north end of 10th Private Road going east, south & south west over Brook Field, Meadow Field and Snoot Common to Haddenham Level Drain
- 2 Starting at south east corner of Plot No 183 inclosures going east and. north east by side of Meadow Field then north and east over Meadow Fen and Starlock Common to a tunnel across 4th Private Road and then north east to a tunnel across 3rd Private Road then north west corner of Hundred acre, then south east to Old West.
- 3 From east side of Public Watering Place going east to tunnel across 3rd Private Rd then east and south beside the road to 2nd Private Drain.
- 4 West end of a tunnel across Cambridge Rd going east to 2nd Public Drain.

Public Drains to be repaired by Surveyors of Highways.

All Ancient Drains and watercourses shall be maintained by proprietors of land.

When owners to fence lands - if highland the fence must consist of ditches 4 feet wide at top and 3 feet deep, the banks to be planted with white thorn layer and proper posts and rails set within 1 foot of the summit of such banks, to be renewed within six years and the new ditch and fence to be repaired by various owners. If the land is fenland then the fence shall consist of ditches not less than 3 feet deep and not less than 8 feet wide at the top.

No drains or banks to be made at the sides of any boundary ditches so as to prevent the water from running along the ditches.

INCLOSURE AWARD 1837 Index to Numbered Plots.

Plot No	Name	description
1	Granger, Ed, Tingey	devises of Sanders P
2	Morgan. Geo. Gould	5 acres
3	Morgan. Geo. Gould	5 acres
4	Morgan. Geo. Gould	5 acres
5	Morgan. Geo. Gould	wood
6	Morgan. Geo. Gould	garden
7	Morgan. Geo. Gould	4 acres
8	Morgan. Geo. Gould	4 acres
9	Morgan. Geo. Gould	Brick Kiln Close
10	Morgan. Geo. Gould	7 acres
11	Morgan. Geo. Gould	Goldsmoor
12	Morgan. Geo. Gould	8 acres
13	Morgan. Geo. Gould	Thoroughfare 6 acres
14	Morgan. Geo. Gould	6 acres
15	Morgan. Geo. Gould	5 acres
16	Morgan. Geo. Gould	6 acres
17	Morgan. Geo. Gould	6 acres
18	Morgan. Geo. Gould	Home Close
19	Morgan. Geo. Gould	House & Homestead
20	Morgan. Geo. Gould	Wood Lane
21	Morgan. Geo. Gould	Homestead
22	Morgan. Geo. Gould	5 acres
23	Morgan. Geo. Gould	7 acres
24	Morgan. Geo. Gould	4 acres
25	Morgan. Geo. Gould	6 acres
26	Morgan. Geo. Gould	Wood
27	Morgan. Geo. Gould	8 acres
28	Morgan. Geo. Gould	Cherry Ground
29	Morgan. Geo. Gould	House & Homestead
30	Morgan. Geo. Gould	Pond Close
31	Morgan. Geo. Gould	4 acres
32	Morgan. Geo. Gould	8 acres
33	Morgan. Geo. Gould	5 acres
34	Murfitt, Will & Isaac	Tenements & Gardens
35	Sennitt, Alice	Orchard
36	Sennitt, Alice	House & Homestead
37	Murfitt, Isaac Jnr	House purchased off W.E.Read.
38	Russell, John	Dovehouse Close
39	Russell, John	House & Homestead
40	Camps, Will	House & Homestead
41	Granger, Thomas Waddelow	House & Tenement
42	Read, W.E.	House & Homestead
43	Read, W.E	Orchard, Garden & Blacksmiths
44	Dimock, J	Orchard
45	Dimock, J	Tenement & Homestead.
46	Meeting House Trustees	Meeting House
47	Russell, Will	House & Homestead
48	Russell, Will	Orchard
49	Granger, Thom Waddelow	Orchard
50	Graves, Hannah	House & Homestead
51	Ely Feoffees	House & Homestead

52	Ely Feoffees	Close
53	Ely Feoffees	Garden
54	Ely Feoffees	Garden
55	Baxter, James	House, Homestead & Orchard
56	Savidge, John & Will	House & Garden
57	Granger, Edw Tingey	devisees of orchard
58	Granger, Edw Tingey	devisees of House & Homestead
59	Ely Feoffees	Shop & Homestead
60	Rysleys Charity	2 Tenements
61	Langford, Levi	House & Yard
62	Wheeler, Robert	House, shop, brewery & garden
63	Archer, Thomas	House
64	Coy, Susanah	Orchard
65	Murfitt, Isaac	House & Homestead
66	Rysleys Charity	Garden
67	Ely Feoffees	Public House & Yard (Bell)
68	Coy, Susannah	House & Homestead
69	Wright, William	Home
69a	Wright, William	Home Close
70	Read, Wm Edwards	Garden purchased off Ann Wentworth
71	Westley, John	Tenement & Blacksmiths Shop
72	Read, Wm Edwards	Homestead, estate of W. E. Read
73	Read, Wm Edwards	House & Garden, estate of W. E. Read
74	Read, Wm Edwards	Garden, estate of W. E. Read
75	Read, Wm Edwards	Orchard, estate of W. E. Read
76		
77	Rysleys Charity	Tenements & Garden
78	Sennitt, Will Snr	Tenements & Garden
79	Money, WM	House
80	Sennitt, John	House & Garden
81	Sennitt, John	House & Garden
82	Coatman, Wm	House & Garden
83	Read, Stephen	House & Garden
84	Blinch, Russell	Tenement & Garden
85	Ely Feoffees	House & Homestead
86	Hall, Gee	Public House & Homestead
87	Brown, Alice	House & Garden
88	Read, Sarah & Ann	House & Garden
89	Read, Wm Edward	1st Allot in garden from G.G.Morgan for estate late W.S.Read
90	Dimock, J	House & Homestead
91	Morgan, Gee G.	Yard
92	Granger, Thom Waddelow	Tenement & Garden
93	Morgan, Geo G.	Tenement & Garden
94	Morden, Edw	House & Homestead
95	Sennitt, Wm Snr	House & Homestead
96	Norman, Eliz	House & Homestead
97	Murfitt, WM	House & Yard purchased off W.E.Read
98	? Lo., Edw	House & Yard
99	Meeting House Trustees	Meeting House
100	Seymour, Matthew	Tenements
101	Norman (Cottenham)	Public House & Homestead
102	Norman Richard	House & Homestead
103	Wright, Wm	House & Garden
104	Clark, David	House, Shop & Homestead
105	Finch, Chas Jnr	Tenements
106	Clark, Daniel	Tenements & Garden purchased of W. E. Read
107	Granger, Ed. Tingey	devisees of House & Garden

108	Sizer, J.	House & Garden
109	Parish, David	Tenement & Garden
110	Taylor, Richard	Homestead
111	Parish, David	Garden purchased of G. G. Morgan
112	Ely Feoffees	House & Homestead
113	Clay, Fred	Tenement & Garden
114	Dimock, J.	Yard
115	Dimock, J.	House & Homestead
116	Russell, Hopkin	House & Yard
117	Osborne, M.W.	Public House & Yard
118	Baber, H.H. Rev	Homestead
119	Langford, Francis	Public House, Home Blacksmiths Shop (Red Lion)
120	Morgan, Geo. G.	House & Garden
121	Baber, H. H. Rev	Garden
122	Baber, H. H. Rev	House & Garden
123	Baber, H. H. Rev	Garden
124	Baber, H. H. Rev	Garden
125	Baber, H. H. Rev	Close
126		
127	Rysleys Charity	Public House, Tenement & Home (Chequers)
128	Langford, Lev	House & Homestead.
129	Morgan, Geo. G.	Tenement & Bakehouse
130	Bullen, Henry	House, Tenement & Homestead
131	Graves, J. (Sen)	House, Shop & Orchard
132	Fisher, Thomas	Escolme & Graves J. devisees of House, Shop & Orchard
133	Wheeler, J.	Tenement & Orchard
134	Paul, Wm Jnr	Tenement & Orchard
135	Jackson, Wm	Tenements, Orchard & Mill
136	Morgan, Geo. G.	Churchyard, Pound Close
137	Morgan, Geo. G.	Churchyard, Pound Close
138	Morgan, Geo. G.	Churchyard Long Piece
139	Morgan, Geo. G.	Churchyard Long Piece
140	Morgan, Geo. G.	Orchard
141	Morgan, Geo. G.	House & Homestead
142	Hazle, Wm	House & Homestead
143	Walls, James	Public House, Homestead & Orchard
144	Ely Feoffees	Close
145	Morgan, Geo. G.	Churchyard 10 acres
146	Morgan, Geo. G.	Churchyard 5 acres
147	Morgan, Geo. G.	Churchyard
148	Morgan, Geo. G.	Churchyard
149	Morgan, Geo. G.	Churchyard
150	Morgan, Geo. G.	Churchyard
151	Morgan, Geo. G.	Churchyard
152	Morgan, Geo. G.	Short Lane, 8 acres
153	Morgan, Geo. G.	Short Lane, 7 acres
154	Morgan, Geo. G.	Short Lane, 7 acres
155	Lock, J.	Tenement & Orchard
156	Lock, Chas	Tenement & Orchard
157	Page, J.	Public House, Tenement & Orchard
158	Archer, Thomas	Orchard
159	Read, W.E.	Close
160	Pigett, Grace	House & Homestead
161	Murfitt, Martha	Tenement & Gardens purchased of W. E. Read
162	Pigett, Grace	House & Homestead
163	Morgan, G.G.	Tenements & Garden
164	Fitch, J. & Cranwell, Wm	Tenements & Garden

165	Langford, J.	Close
166	Coatman, Wm	Tenements & Garden
167	Langford, J.	Close
168	Langford, J.	House & Homestead
169	Blinch, Wm	House & Homestead purchased of W.E.Read
169a	Cockerton, J.	Close
170	Dimock, J.	Tenement & Yard
171	Langford, J.	Close
172	Read, Stephen	Tenements & Garden
173	Read, Stephen	Close
174	Baber, H. H. Rev	Pale Close
175	Granger, Thom.W.	Dovehouse Close & Tenements
176	Granger, Thom.W.	Pingle
177	Baber, H. H. Rev	Breach Close from J.W. & E.,J. Granger
178	Baber, H. H. Rev	Breach Close from J.W. & E.,J. Granger
179	Camps, W.	Barratts Close from G. G. Morgan
180	Hazle, Wm	Bulls Close
181	Clay, Fred	Bulls Close
182	Martin Wm Jnr	Bulls Close
183	Watlode	Close from G. G. Morgan
183a	Everitt, J.	Public House & Yard
184	Ely Feoffees	Clay Pits Close from Wm Spalding
184a	Ely Feoffees	Elfords Close from Sam & Wright Coy
185	Spalding, Wm	Close
186	Spalding, Wm	Public House & Homestead (Charles in the Oak)
187	Turnpike Trustees	Stretham Ferry
188	Granger, Thomas W.	The Island from James Penterson Twiss
189	Wright, Wm	Stamp
190	Wright, Wm	Stamp
191	Wright, Wm	Adventurers Land
192	Sharpe, Fred	Adventurers Land
193	Sharpe, Fred	Adventurers Land
194	Clarke, Dan	Adventurers Land
195	Wright, Wm	House & Homestead
196	Wright, Wm	Adventurers Land
197	Wright, Wm	Adventurers Land
198	Wright, Wm	Adventurers Land
199	Norman, Richard	Adventurers Land
200	Norman, Richard	Adventurers Land
201	Norman, Richard	Adventurers Land
202	Norman, Richard	Adventurers Land
203	Wright, Wm	Adventurers Land
204	Wright, Wm	Adventurers Land
205	Bullen, Henry	Adventurers Land
206	Bullen, Henry	Adventurers Land
207	Bullen, Henry	Adventurers Land
208	Wright, Wm	Adventurers Land
209	Wright, Wm	Adventurers Land
210	Spalding, Wm	Adventurers Land
211	Spalding, Wm	Adventurers Land
212	Spalding, Wm	Adventurers Land
213	Morgan, G.G.	11th Allot in Dr ground from rector.
214	Morgan, G.G.	11th Allot in Dr ground from rector.
215-235	Morgan, G.G.	Hill Ground
236-239	Morgan, G.G.	Becketts Ground
240-243	Morgan, G.G.	Joist Ground
244	Morgan, G.G.	Part of 17 acres

245	Morgan, G.G.	Part of ½ 17 acres
246-248	Morgan, G.G.	Part of 50 acres
249	Morgan, G.G.	Drove
250-253	Morgan, G.G.	6 acres
254	Morgan, G.G.	Little Skirts
255	Morgan, G.G.	Great
256	Morgan, G.G.	Drove
257	Morgan, G.G.	Stow Brink
258	Morgan, G.G.	Parsons 9 acres
259	Morgan, G.G.	8 acres
260-266	Morgan, G.G.	Part of Willow Fen
267	Morgan, G.G.	Stamp
268	Morgan, G.G.	Stow Brink
269	Morgan, G.G.	Garden
270	Twiss, James Peterson	Webbs Holt
271	Morgan, G.G.	Stow Brink
272	Morgan, G.G.	Holt
273	Morgan, G.G.	Stow Brink
274	Waterbeach Level Commis'	Steam Engine
275	Morgan, G.G.	Stow Brink
276	Morgan, G.G.	Stow Brink
277	Morgan, G.G.	Stow Brink
278	Waterbeach Level Commis'	Mill
279	Morgan, G.G.	Tile House Mill Ground
280	Morgan, G.G.	Tile House
281	Morgan, G.G.	Tile House Hill Ground
282	Morgan, G.G.	Tile House Hill Ground
283	Morgan, G.G.	7 acres Tile House
284	Morgan, G.G.	Tile House Calves Pasture
285	Morgan, G.G.	Tile House Ground
286-289	Morgan, G.G.	Seamoor Skirts
290-298	Morgan, G.G.	Joist Ground
299-305	Read, W. E.	Dimock Cote estate late
306-310	Morgan, G.G.	Fidwell Fen (W.S.Read)
311-315	Morgan, G. G.	Joist Ground
316-318	Morgan, G. G.	Mere Ground
319-324	Morgan, G. G.	Joist Ground
325	Read, W.E.	severals estate late W.S.Read
326	Read, W.E.	severals from G.G.Morgan
327	Read, W.E.	devisees of E.J.Granger
328	Read, W.E.	severals from G.G.Morgan
329	Morgan, G. G.	Wash Land
330	Morgan, G. G.	Wash Land
331	Morgan, G. G.	Willow Row
332	Morgan, G. G.	Bow Raft
333	Morgan, G. G.	Gorse Ground
334	Morgan, G. G.	Willow Row
335	Read, W.-E.	part of 20 ac from G.G.Morgan
335	Read, W.E.	part of late W.S.Read.
336	Read, W.E.	part of late W.S.Read.
336	Read, W.E.	part of late W.S.Read.
337	Morgan, G. G.	100 acre Stamp
338	Morgan, G. G.	100 acre 20acre
340	Morgan, G. G.	100 acre Joist Ground
341	Morgan, G. G.	100 acre Joist Ground
342	Morgan, G. G.	100 acre Plantation
343	Morgan, G. G.	100 acre First 10acre

344	Morgan, G. G.	100 acre Weed
345	Morgan, G. G.	100 acre Part of Middle Fen Closes
346	Morgan, G. G.	100 acre Part of Middle Fen Closes
347	Morgan, G. G.	100 acre Par 10 acre
348	Morgan, G. G.	100 acre Mill Ground
349	Morgan, G. G.	100 acre Stamp
350	?	
351	?	
352	Mason, Robert	Cottage & Garden
353	Hazle, Sam	Cottage & Garden
354	Clark, Thomas	Cottage & Garden
355	Clark, John	Cottage Yard & Shop
356	Clark, Matthew	Cottage & Garden
357	Hatch, Wm (widow of)	Cottage & Garden
358	Cropley, John	Cottage & Garden
359	Graves, James (widow of)	Cottage & Garden
360	Pitchferd , Ann	Toll House & Garden
361	Blinch, Wm	Cottage & Garden
362	Cropley, Mary	Cottage & Garden
363	Russell, Francis	Cottage & Garden
364	Taylor, Richard	House & Homestead
365	Sheldrick, James & Mesheck, Jacob	Cottage & Garden
366	Hazle, Joseph	Cottage & Garden
367	Collin, John	Cottage & Garden
368	Collin, John	Cottage & Garden
369	Stretham Overseers	Cottages & yard
370	Parnell, John	Cottages & yard
371	Driver, Robert Jnr	Cottages & yard
372	Taylor, Richard	Cottages & yard
373	Brent, J & Warren, J. & Hatch, J & Smith, J.	Cottages & Yards
374	Driver, Robert Senr	Cottages & Yards
375	Lockerby, Robert	Cottages & Yards
376	Smith, Jacob	Cottages & Yards
377	Langford, Hugh	Cottages & Yards
378	Gibbons, Robert	Cottages & Yards

Appendix 11: The Memoirs of Mrs E A Talbot nee Wesley, 1972; transcribed by Tom Doig, Nov. 1999

Introduction

For years I have had a fancy I should like to write an account of what a village was like in the years between 1881 and, say, 1892.

Stretham was situated on the main road from Cambridge to Ely, twelve miles from Cambridge and four miles from Ely. When I was a child it was a village of about nine hundred people.

Church & Chapel

There was the Parish Church of St James; the Baptist Chapel; Wesleyan Chapel, and the Mission Hall, a corrugated hall, pitch-pine lined. Non-conformity was strong in the village, when I was a small child. The Wesleyans predominated and in 1885 they built a new chapel amidst great rejoicing. My father was John Wesley - no relation whatsoever to the John Wesley, but of course with a name like that he had to belong to the Wesleyan Chapel. One summer morning my Father came to the bottom of the stairs telling my mother to dress me quickly as Lofts the builders were allowing me to lay the very first brick in the new Chapel. I can recall being given a trowel and told to smear some mortar on a red brick, and that was the beginning of Stretham new Wesleyan Chapel (1885).

Public Houses

Stretham was a compact village: Front Street; Middle Street; Back Street; with Pump Lane, Chapel Lane and Cage Lane. Nine pubs excluding the ones at Ferry Bridge and the Wooden Bridge - some of them being merely just for beer. The bigger ones, like the Red Lion, The Chequers and the Royal Standard, had spirit licences. The beer in those days was pretty potent.

The School

The Village school was the property of the Church. When the School became a Board School, an arrangement was made with the Rector that the first three quarters of the hour was allowed to him for religious instruction. School proper started at a quarter to ten.

I think the clause in the Church catechism stuck in the gizzards of the Chapel folk - to order myself "lowly and reverently to all my betters." Betters were the Church folk; silly things, why did they not read on - the duty to ones neighbours in full is a fine thing.

Some of the People

When you entered the village from Cambridge, you slowly climbed a very long slope until you came out on the Ely road at 'Drivers-on-the-Hill,' a farm, and near it was the windmill, run by the Bultitaft family, a funny name! The name of Wright was numerous, then the Sennitts. John Wright lived in the High House. He was a gentleman farmer. The house stood back behind big iron gates in the centre of the village in 2½ acres of grounds. [It was] a Queen Anne House [and] here John lived with his daughter, spoken of as 'Miss Sarah.' I don't remember and 'Mrs' [as] she died before I was born. We had no Squire as such, like Wilburton, two miles away.

The Post Office and some Shops

There were two main shops that sold everything: drapery, grocery, boots & shoes. Swans, which was the Post Office and Savidges, who had a bakery. There were four little shops where all sorts of things were sold. I can remember long tallow candles known as 'dips' tied up in bunches by their long wicks, yellow in colour and very smelly while burning. I believe the price was a farthing per candle.

Water Supply and Sanitation

There was no piped water or indoor sanitation. Lighting was by candle and oil lamps. With regards to drinking water, if you had no well on your premises, you had to fetch it from the village pump, which was on the little grass patch just outside the School House. Every day a man took two big milk pails on a wooden yoke which was our supply for drinking. We had a pump outside the kitchen door but the water was not fit for drinking. Twice my father sunk two wells, only one was of any use and this was for the engines.

Of course, there were lots of water butts, and at one period, my father put a very big galvanised tank at the end of the house so we had lots of soft water.

Sickness & Doctors

The nearest doctor was three miles away at Haddenham or four miles at Ely. Our family doctor was at Ely. If any urgent need arose, Aaron Gillett was called up if it was night & sent off on horseback to Ely; in day time there was the telegraph. It was all so primitive and, in the winter, very cut off.

Travelling to Town

Of course, motors were unknown so if you did not own a horse and trap, you took the carrier's cart - what a place for gossip! The carrier's cart was run by 'Spot' Sennitt, why he was called 'Spot' I don't know! In the summer, Spot sometimes went to Cambridge.

Plough Monday

Plough Monday, the first Monday in the New Year, started during breakfast. Small boys came knocking at the kitchen door, saying, 'Please spare a penny for a poor old plough bor.' This went on until the school bell rang, then it was quiet until the evening. [The evening] was given over to the lads and men working on the land. Three lads, two dressed up, one as [a] woman. The lady always wore a broad-brimmed hat with a veil made out of an old lace curtain, and, if possible, the man [wore] an old top hat. The third boy played a concertina. They did a shuffling sort of dance. As children, we were allowed in the kitchen, and had a glorious time making toffee. The grand finale was a gang of grown men with an old plough and a team of horses (men) and a driver. Such a noise they made! All these people had a scale of pay: school children 1d apiece; lads in the evening sixpence; the group and the plough half-a-crown. They went from houses of farmers and so forth. By the time they had finished, the Red Lion probably took all the money, bar the children. Mother looked after their pennies!

Valentine's Day

This was for the girls and was like May Day - a pre-school affair. Little girls knocked on the kitchen door. When it was opened, they dropped a curtsy and said, 'Good Morning, Valentine.'

May Day

[May Day] was much the same only they brought a doll all dressed up and sitting in a bower. 'Good morning to May Day, lady,' was their chant.

The Village Feast

This event was on the third Sunday in May and lasted until the Wednesday. This was on the lines of a small Fair. On the third Sunday, everywhere was in a bustle as most of the relations of the villagers from nearby villages came over for a good old feed. Of course, [they came] on foot unless they had a donkey and cart.

After the evening services in the various Churches and Chapels, all took a walk up the Ely road to see what the prospects were for the Feast. Would it be a big or little one? If the former, Thurston's Flying Horses would be waiting to come into the village. No caravans or swing boats, roundabouts, coconut shies and such like, were allowed to pitch their booths up until after eight o'clock.

In the centre of the village was the old stone cross, opposite the Red Lion. Here was a shooting gallery. A row of stalls lined one side of the main street. Backing onto them were coconut shies. The stalls were given up to sweets, chiefly rock. The first stall was run by the two Misses Rich, who hailed from St Ives. They were very superior dames, dressed in black satin dresses, large hats, and much jewellery, gold brooches, earrings and long gold charms, and girt around by large white aprons. They sat majestically behind their counter, on which was pink and white rock, sugar biscuits and ginger snaps, all home made.

The swing boats were lower down, near the school and village pump, also a round-about. If it was a little feast, Thurston's Steam Flying Horses had to be lower still as they required quite a space. No one today (1970) can imagine what a thrill this all was after the long dark winter.

The Feast did not open until after one o'clock and closed each day at ten at night. It was quite orderly, perhaps late in the evening, some men were more cheerful and talkative, here and there, a little noise occurred.

As children, we were taken up in the afternoon to buy rock from Miss Rich, on no account from any other stall. Fearsome tales were told of the making of Ponds & Partridge's rock! Then a turn on the swinging

boats, not the large ones [as] they required great strength. You should [have seen] some of the farm hands on the large ones. Up and up they would go till the owners would get 'skeered' and bring out a stout plank to stop them.

On Tuesday there was usually a cricket match with another local team, in the cricket field which was at the beginning of the Wilburton Road. Here the watchers sat on long hard forms round the pitch. You either boiled in the sun or froze in a biting wind. To the children, [it was] very tedious, but a good place for our elders to hear all the latest gossip and scandal.

On Monday and Tuesday people kept open house in a sense. There was always tea for any chance caller, as there was much cake making beforehand, and in the evening of Monday and Tuesday, a cold supper of sorts, cold ham and salad, tarts and cheesecakes. You see the visiting cricket team came from a few miles away and brought their supporters and friends with them. There were no such things as cafes or tea shops so folk dropped in on anyone they knew. All this was very boring for use children, especially as we could hear the flying horses grinding out the latest songs in the distance. What an awful din their music made!

My parents and [their] friends usually strolled up on Tuesday night and patronised the coconut shies and shooting gallery. It all closed Wednesday; if it had been a poor show, they had all gone by midday.

The larger villages all around had these junketings, so quite a little fleet of caravans were always on the move, but all was over by Ely Fair, which was early October, I think, but I am not sure if it was then, or late September. This was the end of all the fun of the fair.

Bringing in the Harvest

For us, as a family, [there] was just one more frolic. The last load of corn to be carted was decorated with boughs gathered from the hedges of the field and we five children were hoisted on top and driven gaily in to the village shouting, "Horkey, oh! more water, oh!" If you try to throw a bucket of water up to the top of a farm cartwell, not much gets up. Anyone could try that liked - all the more fun for us on top!

When I was a child the corn was reaped by hand. No such thing as a combine [harvester] had been heard of - a grass-cutter had just come along and was thought wonderful.

Life at Home

Summer was over and soon the cold winter would be on us, and they were very cold. No rubber hot water bottle to take to bed. If you wanted to warm your bed you could put a brick into the kitchen oven to get hot and take up to bed wrapped in a piece of old blanket, but you must do it yourself, no maid was allowed to do it for you. My father was a bit of a martinet - no hot water to wash with unless the water in your bedroom jug had a coating of ice on it. [Only] then you might go down to the kitchen and get some. It was not brought up to you. Breakfast was at eight o'clock, and we had all to be in our places at table when my father came into the dining room. Midday dinner [was] sharp at 12.30pm; tea 4.30pm; bed at seven for the three elder children; 6.30pm for the two younger.

Tramps, Tinkers, Gypsies and other characters

There were always lots of tramps on the roads, also gypsy caravans camped by the wayside. One gang came regularly every year into our neighbourhood [and] always called on us. Mrs Lee came to the kitchen door [and] asked if the Master was in. Then ensued a bargaining - my Father always bought scrubbing brushes from her.

[Mrs Lee] was a short plump woman and carried a basket stocked with all sorts of things; feather and cobweb brushes known, I believe, as Turk's Heads, clothes pegs, all sorts of brushes, etc. Why Mrs Lee always came to see us was owing to my Father letting them bury a donkey that died suddenly, in one of his fields. Mrs Lee always wore two little silver kettles in her ears as earrings. These kettles were made by a tinker at Little Thetford. We girls thought them wonderful and so they were. The man who made them was a cripple and seldom sober. They were supposed to be made from half-a-crown. [The tinker's] name was Langham Low. His old mother used to say, "If only Langham would keep off the drink, he could live like King George, the gentleman." But he was hopeless. He was also a tinsmith. He could make black tin milk pails for most farmers roundabout.

There were all sorts of characters in the village. Old Sam Wright was known as old "Skim and Blow" to distinguish him from the other Wrights. This was because, when his son, another Sam, complained at breakfast [that] his bread milk was too hot, the old man said, "Skim and blow, my lad, skim and blow."

An oldish couple named Driver lived in a neat little cottage with bee hives (old-fashioned skep ones) and had a big white heart cherry tree in their garden. They were known, at least the man was, as "Johnny Bub

Ground." Why, my father could not tell me. Every year they sent us a big dish of cherries, and a comb of honey. Why, I don't know! They were a neat, clean little couple.

'Donkey Riding'

One family were cursed with a ne'er-do-well son who when drunk, used to beat his wife rather much. This used to give rise to what was known as a "donkey riding." Two men used to sit opposite one another on a donkey, one with a woman's hat on to distinguish her from the man. Then a tableau was acted to represent the wicked husband beating his poor, unfortunate wife. All this was accompanied by a small crowd beating old tin cans, making a devil of a row. They went round the village and ended up outside the man's door. All this was a long time ago, about 1890.

Farming Life

Life was very quiet, especially in the winter. The only lighting was by candles or oil lamps. If you went up the village after, say, nine o'clock in the evening, not a light would be seen. Wages were very low - ten shillings a week for a rank and file agricultural labourer. Twelve shillings if you were a horse or cow keeper; this, of course, entailed more work as there was milking to do and cows and horses to keep clean.

My father was an agricultural engineer. By this I mean he owned threshing and steam ploughing engines. He also farmed a little land. We always had two or three cows for the house thereby supplying us with milk and butter.

Pig Killing

[There were] a pig or two to kill in the autumn to keep us in pickled pork, hams and such like. The killing of a pig was [a time for] great excitement. Sindal, the butcher, came just before breakfast with his big barrel on a trolley in which, after being killed, the pig was plunged into boiling water and Sindal scraped all the bristle off the skin. When piggy came out of his tub he was a lovely pink and white corpse.

We lived high for a few days - pigs fry, faggots, chitterlings, scraps, all offal and all good. Faggots were the fry minced up with sage and onions, then baked in the oven. [It was] very rich and very tasty. Sometimes sausages were made. Scraps were the thick fat [which] was cut into pieces, put into an iron pot, placed on the kitchen range and melted down until all the fat was extracted leaving little pieces of crisp fat, which you had for tea sprinkled with salt. The lard which remained was good, not like the watery stuff sold today. My paternal grandmother called it 'seam'. She also spoke of a jug, a large one, as a 'gotch' or pitcher.

The hams and chaps were laid in brine in large earthenware crocks for a period then taken out and sent to Ely to be smoked. The loin was eaten fresh, but the rest, trotters, belly, etc., was pickled and eaten during the winter. Trotters, steamed or boiled gently and served with parsley sauce, are very nice.

Milk and Eggs

When a cow calved, the first milk was known locally as 'bislings.' If you put it in a pie dish with a little sugar, into a moderate oven, it set like a baked custard. It was much liked by people but I never cared for it.

Eggs, during the summer, were plentiful. When [they] were sixteen a shilling we could have one for tea. When the hens went broody, they were taken by their legs and pumped on to cure them. [It was] not always successful.

My Home and Family

I was the first child of John & Fanny Wesley, who were married in 1880 and went to live in Grove House. This was an old farm house built by old Billy Blinch before 1850, but the exact date I don't know. [The reason] why I give 1850 is because my Father remembers being sent on an errand when he was a boy about then. It was a long low house standing back from the road, a nice garden before it, a little white wicket gate [and] a gravel path edged with box up to the front door. By the side was a large yard with a big barn in it, many sheds and all sorts of buildings including a forge.

At the back of the house was a range of buildings, first a coal and wood shed, then a shed full of lumber [and] finally, stabling for two driving horses, a harness room and a chaff house. These were on one side a paddock [and] a kitchen garden beyond.

My father eventually made a tennis lawn of the paddock of which he was rather proud; woe betide the female that made high heel marks on his lawn!

The kitchen was a lean to, a big room with a stone sink in it and a black range for cooking. [This was] a fearsome thing that had to have its flues swept once a week, and much black to keep it shiny. About

1890 this kitchen was pulled down [and] a wing built on with kitchen and scullery, two bedrooms and a bathroom. The bathroom was something and nothing. There was plenty of cold water laid on, but no hot. If a hot bath was required, the copper in the scullery had to be lighted, and the hot water carried up the back stair to the bathroom. By the time it arrived it was not so hot.

We were a family of five children, four girls and one boy. Emily Arnetta '*Nethie*' (myself); Millicent Irene '*Milly*'; Reginald Thomas '*Reg*'; Daisy Alfrida '*Daisy*' and Blanche Eugenie '*Blanch*'. Like most families, we quarrelled a bit; likewise we had fun [but] we were made to obey. My sister Millie and I, being the eldest, had certain duties to do every day. Breakfast at eight. Directly after, Milly and I had to do bedmaking and dusting. Before breakfast, one of us set the breakfast [table] and the other did half-an-hour piano practice. [This was] all right in the summertime but, oh, when the winter comes, cold drawing room, horrors!

Breakfast and Tea

[For breakfast] we all had to have a basin of hot bread and milk, then we had bacon or whatever else was going - how we hated bread and milk. Sometimes my father would take up the slop basin and go round each of our basins taking a little out of each, thus enabling us to get to the bacon which we liked.

Teatime was at 4.30 and on the table were two plates of bread and butter, one thin slices and one for the children, thick. A lot of manoeuvring went on between us, for when we had eaten the thick, we might have the thin if any was left. Jam was plentiful, so was cake but only one piece of the latter.

We had no supper so you may be sure we stocked up well at tea.

Afternoons

Lessons began at nine until 12.30 for dinner. After dinner we went for a walk in the cold weather, summertime we had half-an-hour or so in the garden. Afternoon was given (from two until four) up to sewing. there was heaps of mending always on hand and we four girls were all good needlewomen, thanks to our stepmother. If our darning was not up to standard, out it was cut and we had to do it again.

A New Mother

My mother died when I was seven and a half leaving my father with five children, the youngest only two. Then followed a period of about one year then my father married again. I seem to be wandering into family history. This must stop!

St James' Church

We had a very nice parish church dedicated to St James, in which was a very fine oak screen period 14/15 century.

My stepmother being C of E, we went to Church in the morning and Wesleyan Chapel with my father in the afternoon, and in the evening to Chapel, with occasional church which was a treat. [Today], folks would smile at the church service in the year 1892.

There was a surpliced choir. When they emerged from the vestry, their footsteps sounded on the tiled floor, 'Dump, clump, clump.' When they reached the wooden floor of the Chancel, [the sound] was muffled.

The incumbent was Canon Cockshott. He was also Rural Dean and his second wife was Dean Meriel's daughter. He was inclined to be somewhat pompous, but his wife was a dear. He had one daughter by his first wife, who was inclined to be what was then considered High Church. Miss Mary, as she was known, had a friend who was very well off. This friend presented the Church with a very nice brass processional cross and some very lovely lace for an altar cloth. This all upset the older members of the congregation!

The first Sunday, the choir came out of the vestry with the said cross, Mr Cockerton sat down with folded arms and John Henry Savidge did the same. How their tongues wagged - we were on our way to Rome by express train! All the non-conformists viewed it with horror and it made food for gossip for weeks but settled down in time.

There were three aisles; we had two pews on the right side [which] were shorter than the middle ones. My sister Milly, myself and brother Reg were in front and Ma and my two younger sisters were behind. Now, like all children, we found the Litany long and dull. Sometimes, we slumped a bit towards the end. The kneeling boards were hard. Woe betide the criminal or criminals [for] we were taken to task when we got home.

The organ was not screened off and was in full view from where we sat. Mrs Cockshott played it and her legs were rather short and she had to wriggle up and down the wooden organ bench, rather funny. Air was supplied by a boy working the bellows. It did, at times, get dim if the lad felt tired.

Matins were not so lively as Evensong as the Psalms were said. In the evening they were sung.

Everyone had their own particular pew. For instance, the Listers, who were well-to-do farmers, on the middle left. In came Mrs Lister looking somewhat like Queen Victoria, Mr Lister carrying a top hat looking very haughty walked up to the top. He was known among the labourers as 'threepenny Lister' because he always tipped with a threepenny piece. Their pew was on the left side of the aisle.

On the right was the Dimmock pew. Pa Dimmock was a real old fen farmer. His wife a tall poker faced woman, dressed in a black mantle and bonnet. I never spoke to her all the time I was at home. John, the elder son, was rather monkey faced; Edith, the daughter, was mouse like. [She] sidled into the pew as if she was 'skeered.'

Horace, the younger son, was about my age and for a brief period we both attended the same school. He eventually became a doctor and set up his practice at Chatteris [*in fact it was Wisbech – MJP*]. This was about the beginning of the 'Panel' which most doctor hated. Horace was not [well] received by the other doctors, but the panel patients liked him. This preyed upon Horace's mind and he took an overdose of veronal. This was a terrible thing, and for a brief period the family were much in the limelight.

Behind our two pews in the Church sat Mr Swan, the sub-postmater and his family. He had a trick of rattling his keys in his trouser pocket when standing up to say responses or to sing.

The Church had a peal of four bells, quite pleasant.

To shorten the distance, the villagers were allowed, such as lived in the lower end, to take as a short cut through the drive into the Rectory, and pass in front of the house, up three stone steps into the churchyard. Now in the Rectory grounds was a rookery. One Easter Sunday we, as a family (minus my father) arrived at the porch a bit late [and as] the choir [was] processing up the aisle, we had to stay there for a bit. We found Mrs Langford Hazel in great trouble coming through the Rookery. The birds had bespattered her new Easter garments, 'Oh! Mrs Wesley, what shall I do?' Poor soul, Ma took out her hanky and Mrs Hazel hers, and between them they tidied her up.

The Chapels - *The Chapels had no resident Ministers.*

First, the **Wesleyans**. In my childhood they were very flourishing. In the year 1885, they built a big new red brick chapel, really too big for the village for the congregation dwindled down very much.

We had two pews just inside the left hand door. The Sunday afternoon service began at 2.30. Imagine a hot summers day, and a rather heavy dinner, leaving us rather sleepy, listening to a sermon most likely by a so-called local preacher. You felt yourself nodding when suddenly a dig in your back pulled you up.

These local [Preacher] men were really very good folk but, at least most of them, uneducated. One had a prayer in which he always, 'Thanked the Lord for lengthening out the brittle thread of lives' another gave rather smug thanks that we were not, on the Lord's day, out with the giddy folks to do evil.

The **Particular Baptists** had a meeting house up the top of the village. John Wright was their chief supporter. They did not believe in infant baptism so when that had garnered another few new members, they held a public baptism 'adults only' down by the river. This was a high festival [and] from far and near came the faithful to give their support to the proceedings.

At a spot known as the Gravel where there was a floating bridge and a safe gravelly spot, the immersion took place. The Rev Routledge, who was their pastor, clad in a long black cassock like garment belted round the waist by a good leather strap, his legs in fisherman's waders, stepped out into the river, not far out. Down the bank came the candidates, ladies first, clad in spotless white garments. One by one, they were taken by his Rev who placed his hand firmly in the small of [their] backs, grasping a belt in front and down they were ducked. As they came up, the faithful, with one accord sang lustily, three times, 'Praise the Lord! Alleluia!' The victim was hurriedly rushed up the bank and into a nearby cottage to take her wet garments off. This was quite pleasant if it was a warm day, but not so nice on a dull day. You have no idea what a crowd gathered, pony and traps, gigs, and even a donkey cart. Once a rather fat, heavy man from Wilburton was ducked but his Reverence had to call for help to get him up.

This was all long ago, about 1890, when a little excitement was very welcome, especially on Sunday.

The Circus comes to Town

Another excitement, vastly different was when Sanger's Circus was due to appear at Ely. In those days circuses travelled by road, lions and tigers in cages but the elephants came on foot by road. So when [the Circus] had been to Cambridge, they passed through Stretham *en route* for Ely.

Near Grove House was a pond. Here the Circus paused. The elephants took in water at the said pond. Up we all got without being called twice, out into the grey dawn we went. There were lots of vans and men about in the early mist. Large shapes appeared looking at us - huge and frightening. [It was] all very exciting especially if a lion gave a roar. For three days the show was at Ely, four miles away, but quite a lot of men and boys trudged there and back after a days work. It was known as Lord George Sanger's Circus. The proprietors Christian name was 'Lord' George.

The German Band and the Dancing Bear

Occasionally a German Band passed through. This was a band of men with brass instruments which gave a volume of sound, but I doubt if any of them were German! Sometimes a bear did a so-called dance, and a man with a monkey wandered through. All this was a very great excitement. Being on the road from Cambridge to Ely, we had all these things.

Cricket Club and other Concerts

During the winter, to raise funds, the Cricket Club gave a concert. Front row 1/-; mid row 6d; back 3d. All local talent? A comic turn was a man from Ely, but the rest was very indifferent. Wilburton went one better in their concert. The rector of Prickwillow used to oblige them by coming to sing comic songs. Quite respectable were such songs in those days. His special turn was 'The old grey mare' which brought down the house. Whatever else he might sing, that had to be.

A Village Wedding

Weddings and funerals were events especially if the bride's parents were well off. I can recall Julia Sennitts wedding which was quite a big affair. Her father, Perry Sennitt, was an egg-dealer. He went round the neighbourhood and collected eggs from the farmer's wives, likewise butter. Egg and butter money was the pocket money of the farmer's wife. On Wednesday, he drove into Cambridge, set up a stall in the market where he sold eggs, butter and poultry. He did the same on Saturdays. Perry made a little pile out of this, hence Julia's wedding. The bridegroom came from London - Holmes by name. Julia's dress was Irish silk poplin with a long train, borne by two bridesmaids in pale green dresses with wreaths of pink roses on their heads, they carried cane shepherd's crooks tied up with green tulle and roses. [There were] four bridesmaids, heaps of guests and a carriage and pair for the bride. The reception was held in a big barn attached to their house. It was a nine day's wonder.

Reverie

Now for another shot at my tales. Betty and Peggy have gone off to the pictures so I am a poor lone widdy woman for a few hours.

*"And all my bones are rotten
Take up this book and in it look
And see I'm not forgotten."*

The Tea Meeting

Another wild excitement was the Tea Meeting. The Church and the Wesleyans were the only people who gave them, the ladies of the respective congregations undertook to give what was called a tray. This was supplying tea, crockery, milk and sugar for a certain number of people who paid sixpence. Bread and butter and cake was supplied by members - anyone could attend.

Long trestle tables were put up in the Sunday School by the Wesleyans. The Church had the School, it being their property. The procedure was as follows: At the ends of the two long tables, which were covered by long white cloths, were a big tea urn and a group of cup and saucers. Plates were put down on each side of the tables. Bread and butter, plain cake, and currant, on large plates down the middle. The unwritten law was to eat plenty and pocket none, but I guess bits of cake were smuggled home, and there was plenty.

Two bakers supplied the bread and cake. You could hear the old dears guessing which was Bradshaws bread and cake and which was Savidges. Tickets [were] 6d. Out for the occasion [came] the family tea urns - some of them very fine and would fetch a price in the antique market today. I wish I were able to draw one!

The Flower Show

Another annual event was the Flower Show. This was held in a tent on the Cricket Field. Oh, what a to do! What heart burnings and jealousies! Daniel Low, who was the groom cum gardener at the High House, usually did well as, of course, he had certain facilities he could avail himself of, such as a little heat from the green houses of his employer. In the evening there were races starting with tiny tots and finishing up with the veterans, There was also a donkey race.

We had a donkey for a short while. What a pest it was! The year Lord Roseberry's horse won the Derby, my brother, Reg, rode the donkey in the race. Would the brute make a start? No! So John Sennitt went behind it and rang the starting bell for all [it] was worth. That did the trick, it went off with a gallop and didn't stop till long past the winning post.

This seems rather tame to you who may read this, but I can assure you to us it was great excitement and, of course, we stayed up later than usual!

Some Notes from My Books

People were much given to writing their names in their books with an attending rhyme. Here are two:

"Steal not this book my worthy friend
For fear the gallows be your end
Up the ladder and down the rope
There to hang until you choke
Then I'll come that way and say
Where is that book you stole away?"

and

Nethie is my name
England is my nation
Stretham is my dwelling place
Christ is my salvation

When I'm dead and in my grave

{there appears to be a page missing here - TBD}

They were made of copper and hung on a stand. the kettle had a tap which you turned; no spout like a tea pot. The tea was put in a muslin bag.

Harvest Festivals

Harvest festivals were a cheerful service whether in the Church or chapels. The Church was finely decorated with fruit and vegetables; lots of berries; Old Man's Beard and Virginia Creeper. The hymns were: 'Come, ye thankful people, come' and my favourite, 'We plough the fields and scatter.' At Church it was a full procession round the Church.

The Railway

Stretham was on a branch railway from Ely to St Ives and in the summer cheap excursions to Hunstanton & Yarmouth were run. Occasionally, the non-conformist Sunday schools of the villages on this line have been known to all join up and go to one of these places.

Appendix 12 : Nonconformity in Stretham

Baptists

By 1656 there was a good Baptist church under the pastoral care of John Tabram. It appears to have been numerous and flourishing as on October 26th Messrs J. Denne & E. Mayle paid them a visit and assisted in the ordination of two teachers Thomas Bedford & Robert Gardiner, and one deacon Thos Gotobed. Things did not always go smoothly. Bedford soon “removed to Hawson and fell into divers immoralities, which obliged the brethren to withdraw their communion with him, and though he afterwards earnestly applied for re-admission into their society, yet his conduct not being consistent with his profession, he was refused”

A congregation continued to meet under a Mr Clark met but ceased to be an organised body after his death c1725. It had revived by 1772 when a new Baptist meeting house was built, adding new galleries to their chapel in 1799. The old Baptist chapel was also taken down and new one opened on the site in September 1818.

Amongst prominent members of the congregation was Charles Wright, of Orchard House, who died in his pew in the Baptist chapel in October 1898. The impact on the congregation was such that the service was abandoned. In March 1914 the Baptist chapel was packed for the funeral of George Perry Sennitt, a major poultry dealer, some 500 villagers assembled at the graveside

Meanwhile the Baptist congregation laid the foundation stone for a large new chapel in 1935 which continues to stand, though ministering to a diminishing congregation. Amongst recent ministers have been Brian Westrep, Bruce Sinden & Ken Howard who retired in 1999

Methodists

The first Methodist Society at Stretham was formed in 1802. One of the leaders was John Dring, a blacksmith who served for 47 years as a local preacher. The first Chapel was in a narrow lane, still known as Chapel Lane. A row of cottages were on the west side were demolished to provide the site. In July 1885 the foundation stones were laid for a much larger building. The stones and bricks containing the name or initials of subscribers can still be seen. The new chapel opened in December 1886 and was acclaimed to be one of the prettiest in the area. The architect was Joseph Gunton and the builders were James Lofts & Sons of Ely. The old chapel was retained as the schoolroom.

During the Second World War the schoolroom was used by the village Infants’ school and evacuated Jewish children.

The chapel continued in use for 100 years but by then major structural repairs were needed. The congregation decided to put their efforts into ministry, not masonry, and transferred their services first to the village school in 1987 and then to the Church. The chapel was sold & has been converted into a design studio and home, still retaining its external appearance.

For more details see the booklet “Methodist in Stretham, by Beatrice C. Stevens, published in 1985

Mission Hall

The London Evangelistic Mission opened a Mission Hall on the corner of Cage Lane in January 1884. Its corrugated iron building was designed by a London architect & included a coffee room and lavatory. The interior walls were lined with wood and covered with texts. On the opening evening 600 people crowded into the main room. It regularly ministered to a congregation of between 100-200 people who sang Sankey hymns accompanied by an organ. It was subsequently sold and re-erected on the corner of Brays Lane Ely for the use of the St John Ambulance Brigade

Appendix 13 : Stretham Fire 1st May 1844

Cambridge Chronicle 4th May 1844:

One of the most awful fires which it was ever our province to record took place last Wednesday, at Stretham, near Ely. The destruction of property is enormous; and when we say that not less than 25 houses, &c., have been razed to the ground, including habitations of wealthy agriculturists and humble labourers, the reader will imagine for himself the extent of the misery which must be the consequence of this lamentable visitation.

The fire originated in a small hovel adjoining the blacksmith's shop of Mr John Westly. It is supposed some sparks of hot iron were the immediate cause of the catastrophe, but this does not quite clearly appear. At any rate about one o'clock in the day the hovel was discovered to be in flames; and although assistance was at hand, and the fire seemed at first but trifling, so dry were the materials of which the hovel was composed that it was very soon enveloped in flames, which communicated with Mr Westly's house on one side, and Mr Wright's stack-yard on the other. No sooner were Mr Wright's extensive and well-stored premises seized upon by the devouring element, than the utmost alarm for the safety of the village was entertained. Nor was this alarm unfounded for the flames spread with such frightening rapidity, on both sides of the street, that in little more than an hour from the time of their breaking out twenty-five occupations, extending over about fifteen acres of ground, were in a blaze.

To describe the scene would be impossible. The reader will conceive the terrible fright and disorder which prevailed, and the awful character of the destruction going on. So wonderfully rapid was the spread of the flames, and so great the heat emanating from the great mass of burning materials, that many of those who fancied their premises secure when the fire first broke out, and consequently neglected to take care of their own furniture, clothes, &c., were unable to secure a particle. Some have lost every chip and every rag, save the garments they happened to have on at the time.

There is no engine at Stretham. About two o'clock the Haddenham engine, and to the good use made of it, under the most active and energetic directions of the Revd S. Banks, incumbent of Haddenham, may be attributed the saving of the great part of the village. On one side of the street, the progress of the flames was arrested at a cow-lodge, belonging to Mr Hazel, and on the other side in the yard of the public house, next Messrs Senet and Graves's premises.

In order that the reader may form an idea of the extent of the damage done by this destructive conflagration, we shall give a list of the premises burnt.

- 1 The hovel in which the fire originated
- 2 John Westly, blacksmith House, furniture and clothes destroyed
- 3 Mr Boultentaft, miller - house, furniture, out-buildings, hay etc
- 4 Mr Wright, farmer - Mr Wright's premises occupy both sides of the street: at present we are describing the property on the south, but we include Mr Wright's total loss. Two barns, stables, cart-lodges, 300 coomb. of wheat, 4 wheat stacks, 3 hay-stacks, 2 straw-stacks, a large number of pigs and fowls, &c destroyed. House saved
- 5 Mr Coy farmer - Dwelling-house, new barn, granary, stables, machines, wagons, out-buildings, wheat stack, straw-stack, about 12 pigs, fowls &c
- 6 Mr Murfitt - house, furniture, barn, stables., hay, &c
- 7 Mr Lester; butcher - House, furniture, clothes, cart, five £5 notes and 40 shilling in silver
- 8 Mr Jackson - house, barn, stable and building, in the yard
- 9 Mr S. Wright- house, barn, stables, hay-stack, wheat, peas and beans
- 10 Mr Philips, baker house, furniture, clothes, stock-in-trade, and in fact every thing
- 11 Alms-houses - two families
- 12 Ditto - four families
- 13 Mr John Wheeler, shoemaker. a brewer - house, furniture, stock-in-trade, warehouse etc
- 14 Mr Hazel cow-lodge. Here the fire was stopped on this side of the street
- 15 Mr Wright see no. 4

- 16 Mr R. Wheeler house and out-buildings
- 17 Mr Gibbons: shoemaker ~ house, furniture, stock-in-trade and every thing
- 18 Mr Dimock - house, buildings &c
- 19 Mr Langford, linen-draper house, furniture, stock-in-trade and every thing
- 20 Mr Baxter, harness maker the same
- 21 Mr Savidge, tailor - the same
- 22 Mr T. Grainger farmer - barn, stables, every out-building, haystack, straw-stack, 30 coomb of beans, about 40 coomb of oats, 14 pigs, a quantity of fowl &c. Mr Grainger's barn was the largest in the county: nothing but the walls are left, and so intent was the heat that the brickwork seems in some places to have been almost molten. The house was saved.
- 23 Mr Levi Langford - house, stable, barn, and other buildings.
- 24 Mr Dring, veterinary surgeon - house and furniture
- 25 Mssrs Senet (sic) and Graves house, barn, and stables.

It will be understood from the foregoing that the desolation is heart-rending. The Church was made the receptacle of the furniture etc which, could be saved: and as to the numerous persons deprived of house and home, they were accommodated as well as circumstances would admit, and every attention paid to them by the clergymen and their neighbours.

Two engines from Ely were present; and the Superintendent and some men of the Isle of Ely Constabulary rendered great service in the prevention of depredations.

It is of course difficult to speak with any thing like accuracy of the damage, but it has been estimated at between £15,000 and £20,000, a great portion of the property being, we fear, uninsured.

A fire of somewhat similar character occurred in Stretham 73 years ago, going over much the same ground,

The Cambridge Independent Press of 4th May 1844 gives some additional information

The homestead of Mr Wright was soon in a blaze & on each side, and in an incredibly short space of time the whole of the Bell Street was in a blaze together with the premises of Mr Granger contributed next, after those of Mr Wright to feed the conflagration, and when the calamity had spread thus fire a feeling of terror seemed to overpower the minds of the inhabitants

The thatched buildings owing to the late dryness of the weather taking fire at the least spark falling on them, while the quantity of stock in the yards of the agricultural gentlemen added materially to the fury and awful grandeur of the scene; their density and size holding the fire an immense while, and causing jets of fire to sping out at intervals.

25 houses quickly fell a prey to the flames and so many families were as quickly deprived of their homes & a roof to cover their heads. 30 families were burnt out, many shelter in church till dwellings can be rebuilt

The homesteads of the following gentlemen were levelled with the ground. Messrs Cory, S Granger, J Langford, J. Murfitt, W. Sennet, S. Wright, W. Wright

Not a house, barn or even a pigsty was left standing in the area over which the flames had spread

Wheeler a shoemaker received under his roof his own and his mother (whose cottage were burnt down) aged 84 & 86 years, the latter of who well remember that on May Day 1771 her mother's cottage was burnt down with all their furniture and they barely escaped with their lives

1844 Fire victims a-z

Mr Baxter, harness maker everything
Mr Boulentaft, miller - house, furniture, out-buildings, hay etc

Mr Coy farmer - Dwelling-house, new barn, granary, stables, machines, wagons, out-buildings, wheat stack, straw-stack, about 12 pigs, fowls
Mr Dimock - house, buildings &c
Mr Dring, veterinary surgeon - house and furniture
Mr Gibbons: shoemaker ~ house, furniture, stock-in-trade and every thing
Mr T. Grainger farmer - barn, stables, every out-building, haystack, straw-stack, 30 coomb of beans, about 40 coomb of oats, 14 pigs, a quantity of fowl &c. Mr Grainger's barn was the largest in the county: nothing but the walls are left, and so intent was the heat that the brickwork seems in some places to have been almost molten. The house was saved.
Mr Hazel cow-lodge. Here the fire was stopped on this side of the street
Mr Jackson - house, barn, stable and building, in the yard
Mr Langford, linen-draper house, furniture, stock-in-trade and every thing
Mr Levi Langford - house, stable, barn, and other buildings.
Mr Lester; butcher - House, furniture, clothes, cart, five £5 notes and 40 shilling in silver
Mr Murfitt - house, furniture, barn, stables., hay, &c
Mr Philips baker house, furniture, clothes, stock-in-trade, and in fact every thing
Mr Savidge, tailor - everything
Mssrs Senet (sic) and Graves house, barn, and stables.
John Westly, blacksmith House, furniture and clothes destroyed
Mr John Wheeler shoemaker. a brewer - house, furniture, stock-in-trade, warehouse etc
Mr R. Wheeler house and out-buildings
Mr Wright, farmer - Mr Wright's premises occupy both sides of the street: at present we are describing the property on the south, but we include Mr Wright's total loss. Two barns, stables, cart-lodges, 300 coomb.of wheat, 4 wheat stacks, 3 hay-stacks, 2 straw-stacks, a large number of pigs and fowls, &c destroyed. House saved
Mr S. Wright house, barn, stables, hay-stack, wheat, peas and beans

Appendix 14

“The Parish Councils Act, how it works in Stretham; John Wesley interviewed” – an article in the Cambridge Independent Press, 27 November 1898

Stretham is an ancient market town. I have before me as I write a copy of a charter granted by Charles I bearing the date of the 13th March 1635, the tenth year of the reign of that unhappy monarch, granting to one Sir Miles Sandys, Knight and Baronet, Lord of the Manor of Stretham, the right to hold weekly fairs and two annual feasts “providing the said market or fairs, or either of them, is not or are not to the damage of any other neighbouring markets or fairs”.

As one drives through the centre of the village, one is struck by the outline of the old parish church, a structure in the Perpendicular style, and by the cross which stands on the Market Hill. This cross is a neat piece of architecture, and its origin is lost in conjecture. Some say it is the market cross, others that it is the resting place of those who bore the corpse of St Etheldreda as they conveyed it from Haddenham Priory to Ely; others aver that a certain Bishop here came for the first time in sight of Ely Cathedral and praying, took off his shoes and walked with naked feet to the scene of his future labours.

Be that as it may the village of Stretham has many interesting associations which carry the mind back far into the hazy past, when the parish was probably more important, comparatively speaking, than it is now. And the influence of the past hangs heavily over the heads of the parishioners to this day, for notwithstanding that in Stretham there is a healthy Nonconformist and Liberal part of the community, as a whole it is not progressive.

The maxim in which the chairman of the Parish Council embodies the philosophy of the village is that “Providence can do what it may but Providence itself shall not impose a ½ d rate upon the parish. The parish has an acreage of 3,809 and rateable value of £7,434, while the population stands still at about 1,050. Still Mr Wesley informed me that the parish held its population better than any other in the neighbourhood.

Mr Wesley is the Chairman of the Parish Council and a principal in the firm of Wesley & Company, whose engineering works are at Stretham. “The company”, he told me, “employs on the average about 20 men in the works and in superintending ploughing and threshing tackle which we send out to farmers. There is a large demand among the farmers for steam driven machinery, although we have been obliged to come down with the times in prices, so as to bring it within the reach of the farmers.”

Turning to Parish Council affairs Mr Wesley said allotments were the great burning question of the day. The allotment land belonged originally to seven parishes. It was part of a piece of wasteland known as Grunty Fen. When this was open waste it was used for pasture, anybody could turn one to a thousand sheep out there to pasture. When this was enclosed under the Enclosure Act they allotted to each of these parishes so many acres for allotments according to population and the remainder was taken up by the freeholders of the parishes.

“To enclose these allotments and allot them out & pay for the portion of the roads, they had to mortgage the land. The income from rents was put up by public auction and sold, & so Stretham has always since been paying a £40 a year rent charge for 39 acres 3 roods 30 poles. The tenants came to the Council and complained of the rent being excessive. They were charged 8s per rood – it had been 10s, and it is very poor land. No one knew why they were charged this. Neither the Rector nor wardens knew anything about it. I, however, went to the award and took this copy relating to Stretham and showed it to a barrister who is willing to give me any information on these matters. I was wondering if we could not borrow the money at a less percentage and repay it in that way. When he read the award he said it was a rent charge which varied according to the price of corn. That opened up a new aspect of affairs. The Parish Council itself as wardens of the allotments undertook to reduce the rent 1s per rood, and opened up correspondence with the owners of the rent charge, asking why the charge had not varied with the price of corn according to agreement and afterwards asked for a return of all moneys paid in excess of what was due under the Tithe Rent Charge Act. The Solicitor for the owners questioned the title of the Council to make this demand. The clerk was instructed to point out the clause of the Act under which we acquired authority, and on November 12th a letter was laid before the Council respecting the balance due to the Council, which the solicitors for the owners make out to be £18 13s., after the allowance of the rent for the present year. We had refused to pay any more rent until the matter was settled.

“In addition to this land we have 17 acres in the village, let out in roods at 12s. a rood. It is splendid land, and we have no difficulty in getting the price.”

Charities

“Part of this 17 acres belongs to the Rysley Charity, left by Dr. Rysley, a former rector. The gross income from this charity is £97 1s. 6d. from land and house property. Then there is property left by Martha Digby, some of which is land included in the 17 acres allotments, and the rental of that is £17 3s. 10d. There is also Upton’s Charity, consisting of property bringing in an annual income of £6 8s. Another source of income is from a farm at Upton in Huntingdonshire. Christ’s College are the owners, but they have to pay us a certain sum; some years it comes to £30 and one year they brought us into debt by buildings etc. Our charities’ income averages about £120 a year and this is given away on New Years Day in the way of tickets for coals and clothing to every labourer’s family. Yes, the Council have representation on the trusts. I was elected with Mr G. Driver and Mr J.B. Dimmock to represent the Parish Council in place of the churchwardens. We found that the charities had been economically managed, and there were no abuses”

I here remarked on the fewness of thatched cottages in Stretham and the neatness and substantiality of the dwellings to the casual observer. “Yes” assented Mr Wesley, “but there are some very bad dwellings in Stretham yet. In 1844 we had a tremendous fire in the village which burnt half of the cottages down & I should like to see another to burn some that are left. As to ditches and drains I have maintained that we ought to have control of all sanitation of the village, but hitherto I have been opposed by a majority of the Council, who are perfectly satisfied with the way in which sanitary affairs are conducted. You see the Surveyor is not under the control of the Council. The law tells you that you can appoint a surveyor, and when you have done so you have no control over him whatever. I say he ought to be the servant of the Council, and I think the law should be altered to that effect. Yes we appoint our own overseers. We have not made out a valuation list, although the overseers have had to deal with that under the new Rating Act

Water supply

“The lower end of the village is badly supplied with water; its only source of supply is rain water and soak wells. This year, on April 16th, at the first meeting of the new Council, a letter was read from the Clerk of the District Council asking for the opinion of the council as regards the desirability of making a public water supply in the Green End. It was carried by the Council – I & others dissenting – that it was neither practicable nor desirable. Taking the village as a whole, there is more than one-third without any proper water supply. Many of the villagers have to come half-a-mile in order to get drinking water. There is an abundant supply of water at the top end of the village – anywhere above the church, but you would have to go 500 or 1,000 feet to the gault in order to get to the lower greensand, at the lower end of the village. I believe I could secure a supply to the whole village for the cost of a penny rate, and yet the Council will not grant it”

Burial Board

“We have taken over the business of the Burial Board in regard to the public cemetery. That cemetery consists of one acre and it is supported by a special Burial-rate. We selected a site on the Lord of the Manor’s estate/ We asked for one acre in a certain field and he agreed to let us have it for £100, we paying the cost of transfer etc. We immediately wrote to his solicitors who said the abstract of title would take up forty folios, which we did not want. The transfer cost, I think, something like £80, and the cemetery as a whole cost us about £350. It was controlled originally by a Board of nine members. Our present Burials Committee consists of the whole of the Council. We hold out meetings publicly in the Board School, but very few people have come to them hitherto. For the future we are going to post our agenda paper on a notice board so that the people will be able to see when meetings are to be held and what business is to be transacted”

Nothing for Improvements

The Stretham Council is able to make the empty boast of having spent nothing on improvements. It has spent, however, some £2 19s on printing and other formal expenses, and the rest of its expenditure has been in regard to elections

“As to elections”, said Mr Wesley, “I think that a poll ought not to be allowed on the demand of one ratepayer. There ought to be at least two or three. The show of hands too is unsatisfactory. A simple form of ballot wants introducing into the parish meeting instead of the show of hands. Our first contest cost us £10 7s. Out of that we purchased all the

requisite paraphernalia and our last election cost between £6 & £7. I believe the Parish Council should be the Sanitary Authority, but, of course, there should be a superior authority, which should see that the Parish Council does its duty”

A Difference

“There has been a slight cause of difference between the Parish Council and the County Council, which arose in this way. We had some trees growing by the side of the turnpike adjoining the Parish Land and I thought they, together with the herbage, belonged to the owners of the adjoining land, and we carried a resolution instructing our Clerk to write to the Surveyor of the County Council calling his attention to the fact. The Survey of the County Council ignored us, and said he had orders from the Committee to sell the trees and he sold them. Now, Mr Corrie Grant has laid it down as his opinion that trees and herbage on the highway are the property of the adjoining owner. However they have done it without asking our assent”

This concluded our conversation. Afterwards I walked round Mr Wesley’s works, and on entering the high road adjoining the allotments I came across one of the parishioners making his half-mile journey for a couple of pails of drinking water. Surely this is an anomalous state of affairs which ought speedily to be ended.

Appendix 15: Wesleys works

Joseph Wesley was the son of the blacksmith at whose premises the awful fire of 1844 had originated, and by 1881 was a veterinary surgeon and machinist employing 12 men and two boys.

His son, John who lived at Grove House farmed 18 acres and employed two men. Between them they developed as steam cultivating and threshing contractors, corn, cake, coal & manure merchants. There was a large demand among the farmers for steam driven machinery, and in 1896 were employing on average 20 men in the works. This number later increased to 30.

Wesley's works, called Grove Works, were at the junction of Green End and Newmarket Road in a big yard surrounded by buildings. They had another site, which subsequently became Crossways Garage, & fields down Green End and on Cambridge Road.

The firm had three sets of ploughing engines, two made by Fowler and one by Aveling & Porter. They would pull ploughs across the fields on wires, one engine pulling, the other letting the wire out and pulling the plough back at the end of the furrow. There would be two drivers, a relief driver, a man to steer the plough or cultivator and a cook boy who had to go to the nearest village and buy food. They took a big living van with iron wheels wherever they were as far afield as Longstanton and Lolworth.

Jack Chapman from Wilburton described his experiences: "We ploughed 26 acres at Elford Farm and then moved on to Gravel Road, Stretham, to do 40 acres for Mr Dimmock. We had taken the field down to the bank of the Catchwater and were turning to finish the field when the left-hand engine slipped into an old dike and completely buried herself. It took a week to get her out. We left that job to go on to Stuntney to plough land for Mr Cole Ambrose. We used to do about 600 acres each year for him. Some of the fields were done over two or three times and they used to hook a Martins Spring Tined Cultivator behind ours with a man on it to help it around the ends" [SB31]

The men would bike home on Saturday morning and go back on Sunday night or early Monday morning. Ploughing or cultivating was charged by the acre. The men were paid a weekly wage and acreage money at Christmas, the more they did, the more they had to draw at Christmas.

The firm also had two steam threshing tackles and a portable one which had to be dragged by horses, which went round from farm to farm. When they went threshing they would charge so much a day and then so much an hour because they'd be done an hour before full time and the farmer would object to paying them for a full day.

When the engines were at home the Wesleys used to find work for the men on their fields, trimming ditches, hedges etc & they never got rid of anybody if they could avoid it.

During the Great War Wesley's traction engines were busy breaking up ground that had not previously been farmed but still had difficulty retaining men. In October 1916 the firm applied to be allowed to retain John Hitch, Walter Wolff & Charles Langford, all engine drivers but two were refused, Walter Constable, horse keeper was exempted. The company appealed in December. They said they had two sets of steam ploughs and three sets of threshing machines. Their staff comprised eight engine drivers (five of military age, 3 single men), two cultivating men of military age, two drum feeders (over age), one mechanic in the shop, two boys between 15 & 17 and two woodmen. Mr Wesley's son was assistant manager. They could not make steam ploughmen without any experience. Ten men had left, none of whom had been replaced. Many agriculturalists were dependent on them & they had been 'pushed' by the Board of Agriculture throughout the season. They had 1,000 acres of land on their books now, of which half would not be done. Their appeals were dismissed.

In December 1917 all the village turned out to see the complete set of tackle arrive home – two engines, a living van, two water carts, a seven-furrow balance plough, a thirteen-tine cultivator & a harrow.

There was one stationery engine which drove all the machinery in different departments,

The company had their own workshop repairing broken engines & blacksmith's shop, employing two men Thomas Collins (Ernie Collin's father), worked there. In 1898 they were granted a patent for an improved safety guard for steam driven chaff cutters. Many cut off their hands or arms & John Wesley himself lost a leg in a threshing machine in 1866

They also had a carpenter's shop in which they made tumbrel carts. Charles Burnham was head carpenter and employed various apprentices over the years.

In another part of the complex they manufactured metal skewers. Rusty wire was fetched from the station in two coils, processed and tinned until it was bright, then putting in the ring end, and pointed, put in water and rinsed. Women packed them in cardboard boxes depending on the length of skewer & then into wooden boxes which were despatched from the railway station.

All of this needed efficient office and accounting procedures.

The firm sold up in 1918 with a seven-day sale on the Recreation Ground. Benzley Wright recalled: "It was marvellous to hear the bidding at £100 a time - £1899, £1900 £2000 for an engine - never heard of before or since. They made a lot of money. You never saw such a sight on the cricket field as that one".

The two big ploughing sets were bought by Reg Wesley who retained the yard. After a few years they were sold to Sydney Smith. Jack Chapman returned to work there in 1921, harrowing & draining in the springtime and ploughing & cultivating in autumn. In 1926 the engines were driven on to the new Stretham Ferry Bridge to test its strength an exercise repeated later on the Military Road bridge when this was finally opened in 1928.

Wesleys had employed many men Most of the tradesmen came from outside and taught the apprentices. Tom Collins came from Norfolk and after Wesley's packed up he continued the engineering business which is still continued by Ernie Collins

March 1925 saw the death of John Wesley, engineer. He had been born in Stretham in 1853 and lived all his life in the village. He'd been educated in the village school and had a strong connection with the Wesleyan church, was a JP, chairman of the Parish council, school manager and charity trustee. He also had the first car in Stretham. He carried on his engineering business for over 40 years until he retired in 1923 due to failing health [WS 20.3 1925].

The old barns of the former Wesley works were demolished about 1980 for new houses

Jack Chapman's "My life with steam" was published in the journal "Steam Preservation", nos 70 & 71.1986.

Appendix 16

**Stretham in the Gt War: extracts from the Ely Standard 1914-1918;
edited for the Stretham Millennium History by Mike Petty**

1914

August

United service on Recreation Ground, over 400 present addressed by Stitt & Routledge ... stand united, sinking all sectarian differences; Stretham has already contributed its quota to numbers called up (ES 14.8.14)

October

new Military Road proposed, from Dimmock's Cote to Stretham - a road 16' 10" wide along existing driveway to be paid for by the Road Board, start made, large number of men employed but hit snags over railway crossing and bridges over Cam & Old West cause delays and arguments between South Level Commissioners & Isle of Ely County Council, by May 1915 road built but not the bridges (ES 9.10.14)
National Reservists called up - T. Fletcher (47) Suffolk Regt (ES 23.10.14)

November

Percy Routledge, Swan & Metcalfe brothers training as signallers with Suffolk Regt at Colchester - "It is a fine life ... no regrets that answered country's call, sorry than no more than 5 have joined Kitchener's army (ES 8.11.14)

December

2 Stretham men enlist; Archie Sennitt, son of F.O. Sennitt having enlisted in Canadian forces and been training on Salisbury Plain spends Christmas with parents ES 4.12.14)

1915

January

Stitt writes in Deanery magazine about German atrocities (ES 8.1.15)
recruits - John Badcock & Sidney Canham join Suffolks, (ES 22.11.15) P.J. Winter (ES 29.1.15)

February

death of wife of Edward Lowe, carrier; one of sons on active service in navy & could not get leave (ES 26.2.15)

March

Pte Sindall, son of the butcher, Suffolks, reported missing - heard that PoW in Germany; in army 19 years, most in India; Pte Frohock & Sadler have been PoWs for some weeks (ES 26.3.15)

April

Wesleys engines pump Norfolk flood waters (ES 2.4.15)
War Committee send presents to troops, money to PoWs (ES 16.4.15)

May

Pte Edward Lythell died as result taxi accident in Birmingham; 13th Hussars, called up in August, home on leave from front at time (ES 14.5.15)

June

Pte Archie Sennitt kia, shot in head in neighbourhood of Ypres ... (ES 25.6.15)

July

Serg Walter Murfitt recommended for bravery (ES 2.7.15)
recruiting party, 70 strong, arrive in village accompanied by Brass Band, lunched by Rector and marched to cricket green for speeches etc before on elsewhere (ES 2.7.15)

July Pte James Baxter wounded in head, recovering in Fulham hospital (ES 2.7.15)
Boy Scout troop progresses favourably; work in fields till late at night (ES 9.7.15)
Pte P.J. Winter reported Missing - last heard May 2nd, hope he in enemy hands (ES 16.7.15)
48 Stretham men serving from male population of 504 - 9.5% (ES 23.7.15)

September

East Anglian Royal Engineers billeted in village last few weeks - dredging that part of Old West when pontoon bridge will be placed (ES 17.9.15)

October

Fred Victor Yarrow & James Gent join up - Rifle Brigade, Jim Baxter wounded, returns to trenches after stay in Stretham (ES 8.10.15)
L/Serg Walter Murfitt kia France, Oct 5th; details (ES 15.10.15)

November

church service - dead Abel Clark, Walter Murfitt, Archie Sennitt, John Winters "missing" (ES 5.11.15)
Serj John Ayres (Suffolk) wounded (ES 12.11.15)
2nd Lieut R.M. Wheeler promoted temp Lieutenant, Middlesex Regt (ES 12.11.15)

1916

January

PoWs Lance Corp A.W. Chapman, Pte T Frohock, T. Mason, J. Sadler, J Sindall (ES 14.1.16)

March

exemption tribunals start
Ernest John Swan applied in interest of mother for himself & brother Walter Swann - owned shop, mother an invalid; his brother did majority of postal business exemption for Ernest but not Walter (CIP 17.3.16)
Charles Wright applied - had lost 6 single and 3 married men off farm & only left with 11 - had advertised for 3 weeks for yardman but without reply (CIP 16.6.16)
severe blizzard & storm, uproots trees (ES 31.3.16)

April

Albert Baxter writes re conscientious objectors (ES 14.4.16)
exemption : Harold Ellwood, blacksmith, Thos Lawrence, miller (ES 21.4.16)
Wright applies for Nightingale (ES 14.4.16)

May

exemption : Walter Swan
Stretham has sent out bravest & best of her sons to fight in the cause of freedom & honour" ... nearly every home has representative on battlefield & brave lads at front will feel a thrill of pride in the old village when they learn what has been accomplished by those left at home ..." (ES 12.5.16)
Pte J.D. Wheeler wounded on May 7th - having returned from Stretham after leave on May 2nd (ES 19.5.16)
J.W. Stubbins wounded in left eye (ES 26.5.16)

June

memorial service at church for late Lord Kitchener; boy scouts in mourning marched behind choir ... (ES 16.6.16)
Wesley appeals at tribunal, advertises for engine driver (ES 28.7 & 4.8)

August

Corp. Frank Baxter kia 20 July, Percy Routledge reports how bullet entered lung or heart during assault; on leave end of year & returned Dec 5th; aged 27 (ES 11.8.16)
Pte Leonard Constable wounded in chin, right arm & left leg (ES 11.8.16)

memorial service at Mission Hall for fallen; roll of honour in porch of church has 118 names - including names of fallen from Stretham & Thetford - Langford, Clark, Winters, Mason, Lowe, Sennitt, Dewsberry, Murfit, Darby, Baxter (ES 18.8.16)

September

L/C R.C. Routledge honoured for gallant action 24-29 Sept 1916 at Battle Thiepval (ES 18.4.18)
Albert George Wesley kia 8th August [ie before the memorial service held], 20 yrs; on leave June, back 20th (pic ES 15.9.16)
Pte Wm Henry Constable kia 18th Aug 30yrs; was home on leave July (pic ES 15.9.16)
Military road tar spraying complete S side of Dimmock's Cote (where military guard still stationed); pontoon bridge remains but hope permanent bridge soon
Benjamin Bullman, kia Aug 16, 25; on leave Feb, went to front May 6 1916 (ES 15.9.16)
roll of honour 118 men from Stretham & Thetford; 12 will never return (ES 15.9.16)

October

comforts fund makes 95 garments (ES 6.10.16)
tribunal - Wesley applies for 4 men (ES 27.10.16)

November

Lance Corp Herbert Howe kia Sept 9th; had served in South African campaign; on leave June, to France Sept 1915 (ES 10.11.16)
Pte George Hitch missing since 14 Oct (CIP 17.11.16)
Pte Charles Hitch wounded & convalescing at Gloucester (CIP 17.11.16)
Tribunal John H. Sadler, vermin killer (ES 24.11.16)

December

Tribunal - Wesley appeals - details (ES 1.12.16)
lantern lecture on Gallipoli (ES 1.12.16)
Corp Russell Routledge, son Rev Routledge awarded Military Medal for gallantry in field; has 2 other sons serving (ES 8.12.16)
Lieut Russell Wheeler kia ... details (ES 15.12.16)
Heber Hazel narrow escape – (pic ES 22.12.16)
Corp George Swan rec'd Military medal for distinguished conduct 19-20 July during Battle of Somme (ES 15.12.16)
Pte Chas Asplin & L/C Bert Baxter home on leave from Somme front
L/C Bert Baxter conducts service at Mission Hall; brother Corp Frank Baxter kia a few weeks ago ... (ES 29.12.16)

1917

January

tribunals : includes Ernest George Routledge (18) applies for exemption on ground of ill health; son of Rev Routledge; refused; Hudsons & Sons applied for Percy Crowe blacksmith engaged in making hand-made army horseshoes; military appeal but withdraw when see quality of work (ES 5.1.17)
Joseph William Lowe Suffolk Regt, from pneumonia, 24; joined 18 May 1916, to France Nov & died Jan 9th (ES 19.1.17)

February

Stretham company of Volunteer Force undergoing drill & musketry instruction; has 100 men by Feb with concert in schoolroom; when efficient will get grant from war office for hire of drill room; want their own rifle range in village (ES 23.2.17)

March

tribunals : include Chas Wright applies for men - since they took 2 of his men 30 acres had gone out of cultivation - did not have labour – should be wheat but is thistles & grass;
A.E. Wright applies for himself - small holder & carter; farmed 9 acres himself & worked for others; had lost left eye when blacksmith's assistant; one of the hardest working men in Stretham – exempted (ES 2.3.17)

appeals include - Reg Hazel, John Henry Sadler, vermin catcher; Rev A. Routledge appealed for Ernest Gordon - 3 of his sons had volunteered at beginning of war and were in army - felt justified to retain this one who was not physically strong (ES 16.3.17)

April

Corp Spencer Ambrose seriously wounded by shell bursting (ES 13.4.17)

war working party - 24 people (ES 13.4.17)

L/C R.C. Routledge honoured for gallant action 24-29 Sept 1916 at Battle Thiepval (ES 18.4.17)

May

death Albert E Wright, youngest son late Wm Wright of S; had 2 sons kia 1 July 1916 during Battle Somme by shell burst; shock brought on paralysis from which never recovered (ES 18.5.17)

Egg collection fortnightly for wounded in Cambridge, Misses Hazel, Wesley, Jacobs & Bent volunteered, obtained 250 eggs (ES 25.5.17)

June

21st annual parade, Friendly Societies (ES 1.6.17)

Military Road : at entrance next raised embankment on Fodder Fen, Wicken is sign 'no thoroughfare' & condition of surface becoming overgrown with grass shows that the road is not being used, although cost of material & labour has been great. The pontoon bridge which was some time in use was removed some months ago (ES 8.6.17)

Tennis party, J. Wesley's garden for war work party, supply wool for socks for soldiers (ES 8.1.17)

July

Military Road : a number of workmen actively engaged near Cam, hope bridge soon erected (ES 6.7.17)

Red Cross Sale raised £10 for parcels for PoWs (ES 6.7.17)

August

Sec-Lieut J.D. Wheeler killed when leading men over German Front line which enemy holding with numerous machine guns; a few months ago his brother Russell also killed – details (ES 24.10.17)

Military Road : workmen finished at Dimmock's Cote, appears astonishing that a good hard road should not be used & a permanent bridge erected over the stream (ES 24.8.17)

Pte E.J. Taylor, previously 'missing', now dead (ES 31.8.17)

September

Pte Percy Beasley, kia France & buried where he fell, he died 'nobly & gallantly' (ES 7.9.17)

Memorial service at church for late Wheeler brothers (ES 7.9.17)

War work room will reopen, last year made 334 articles for wounded (ES 7.9.17)

L/Serg Albert Baxter kia, was active worker at Mission Hall; his brother kia July 1916 (ES 14.9.17)

Memorial service for Albert Baxter, Percy Beasley, Horace Wesley at Mission Hall (ES 21.9.17)

Mrs Jarman has official notification her husband severely wounded (ES 28.9.17)

death of Mr J.L. Wright at his residence (ES 28.9.17)

October

Egg collection fortnightly for wounded soldiers continues (ES 26.10.17)

November

Exemption tribunals : Thos Lawrence, miller says he did 30-40 sacks of flour & 60 sacks of grist a week, had only one man, about 62 (ES 9.11.17)

Tribunal : Harry Hazel applies for Percy Hazel; on a field of 200 acres he has two other labourers; has 2 boys, both deaf & dumb; his two elder sons were in the army, one wounded four times; Stanley Brown, threshing machine proprietor (ES 23.11.17)

December

Sergt Herbert L. Swan kia, son of Mrs Swan of the Post Office (ES 14.12.17)

Labourers' Union social evening at White Horse Inn; "with present cost of living their wages were not sufficient" (ES 21.12.17)

1918

January

Pte Ernest Routledge, son of Pastor Routledge of Mission Hall kia (ES 4.1.18)

March

Tribunal : John Catchpole, Agricultural Labourers Union (1.3.18)
aeroplane week, Stretham raises £970 (ES 22.1.18)

April

Sec Lieut. Innes A. Stitt reported 'missing', son of Rector (ES 12.4.18)
Tribunal : George Lowe, shoeing and general smith (ES 26.34.18)

May

Pte Alfred Routledge has been gassed in France (ES 3.5.18)
Heber Hazel kia (ES 3.5.18)
Tribunal : John Catchpole, member of District Wages Cmte (ES 3.5.18)
Rev Stitt writes: "The war is drawing us all together ... by the common fellowship of suffering and anxiety; this month we have heard of Innes Stitt, missing, Charles Porter wounded & prisoner, Charles Asplin wounded, Thomas Cross dangerously ill; George Stitt leaving for the Royal Navy (ES 10.5.18)
Tribunal : Percy Hazel – his father had 199 acres and employed 2 other men, one son had been kia, another in France & 2 others stone deaf; Albert Wright had 16 acres, had lost his left eye (ES 31.5.18)

June

Tribunal : John Hopkins, butter merchant with 180 registered customers (ES 14.6.18)

August

Tribunal : S. Leach, White Lion, butcher; Wm Gautrey, grocer; P. Bradshaw, baker; Ernest Swann, grocer with 600 registered customers (ES 9.9.18)
Remembrance Day united service; a second group of photos of those who died has recently been added to war shrine (ES 9.8.18)

September

Pte Cyril Seymour severely wounded in back and right thigh (ES 13.9.18)
The Rector of Stretham and the labourers' union: Mr Stubbs made an attack on Rev Stitt for an alleged statement that the Board of Trade was alone responsible for the advance of labourers' wages up to 30s. & Union should claim no benefit ... in consequence several members had deserted the Union: "it is disgraceful that churchmen who know the condition of poor labourers ... seen wives and children badly clothes ... and never lifted a finger, should now come forward to destroy the work of the Union" (ES 13.9.18)
Rev Stitt sends letter from Cheshire: "unqualified denial to absurd statement ... I am far too much interested in the welfare of the labouring men at the front and his wife & dependants at home to care very much about those who remain safely at home & seem to forget there is a war on. I deeply regret mischief being made during my very brief holiday"
Tribunal : John Hopkin, poulterer, has only dairy produce stall on Cambridge market
Casualty : Pte Elijah Constable wounded in head (ES 27.9.18, pic 4.10.18)

October

Military Road bridge: Road Board had agreed to pay ¾ cost of bridge over Cam after war, and pontoons provided; now they wanted to shuffle out of the undertaking. Road will not be maintained until bridge built (ES 18.10.18)

November

coal stocks very short, position at Stretham has been awful but now got five trucks in (ES 1.11.18)

Armistice 11th November 1918

death of son of Henry Acred of pneumonia, first fatal victim of current epidemic & five sisters & elder brother also seriously ill (ES 15.11.18)

December

man summonsed for keeping dog without a licence; had bought it at Red Cross sale, it was knocked down to him 2 or 3 times for the benefit of the fund (ES 6.12.18)

George Stitt was in "Iron Duke" at pageant of surrender of Hun fleet (ES 6.12.18)

Note : the full index to the Ely Standard is housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Lion Yard Library, Cambridge where the newspapers can be consulted. It covers not only Stretham but every village around Ely

Appendix 17

GREAT WAR SOLDIERS, some biographical notes compiled by Mike Petty

AMBROSE, Spencer

Corporal

1917 : seriously wounded, shell burst causing wound on face & fracturing left leg; now in Canadian hospital
ES 13.4.1917 p8 picture ES 27.4.1917 p8

ASPLIN, Charles

Private

1916 : on leave from Somme ES 29.12.1916 p8;

1918 : wounded & in hospital ES 10.5.1918 p8

ASPLIN, Jack W

1914 : one of old Army reserve, joined up August; served continuously; took part in retreat from Mons; 1919 : marries Rose Wesley ES 14.11.1919 p8; Secretary of Comrades ES 29.8.1919 p8

AYRES, John

Sergeant Suffolk Regiment

1915 : wounded & in hospital in England ES 12.11.1915 p8

BADCOCK, John

Suffolk Regiment

1915 : recruited ES 22.1.1915 p5

War memorial committee member

BARBER, J

in Comrades ES 29.8.1919 p8; memorial meeting ES 14.11.1919 p8

War memorial committee member

BAXTER, Albert V

Suffolk Regiment

son of James Baxter; brother of Corp. Frank Baxter, killed July 1916 at Battle of Somme

career : teacher & active worker at the Mission Hall

1914 : enlisted, 11th November

1916 : Jan 1st went to France; April: writes home; "on 20th March I was lying in a farm near the firing line when I saw an article about a Conscientious Objectors - a Baptist, like myself. Send them to France with picks and shovels to dig for us or fetch rations every night. Where we keep slipping off the path it is knee deep in water ...; August his brother Frank killed in action; December home on leave; by now a Lance-Corporal & conducts service at Mission Hall - "I carry a bible everywhere I go, I study it in many weary hours of waiting ... when men face death in the firing line and see comrades fall by their sides it saddens me to come home and see the empty places in Sunday School and church ... Xmas Day leaves Stretham to go back to war

1917 : promoted to Sergeant; August killed, 26th : "He was doing an important piece of work when rifle bullet passed through his heart & passed away instantly and without pain"; he was one of cheeriest men in platoon & a most trustworthy NCO - if he could see us now he would expect us to be brave"; September memorial service for himself and Albert Baxter, Percy Beasley & Horace Wesley at Mission Hall, by Pastor Routledge who has 4 sons in France

BAXTER, Frank

Suffolk Regiment

son of James Baxter; brother of Serg Albert V Baxter, killed August 1917

career : Sunday school teacher at Mission Hall

1915 : December home on leave, left for France Dec 5th

1916 : July killed in action on 20th; August memorial service in Mission Hall

BAXTER, James

1915 : wounded in head & recovering in Fulham military hospital ES 2.7.1915 p8; picture ES 16.7.1915 p8; returns trenches after stay in Stretham ES 8.10.1915 p8

BEASLEY, Percy William

Hants Regiment

career : pig dealer : summonsed in January 1916 for failing to keep pig dealers register properly entered up; was expecting to be called up

1916 : March went into training; August home on leave, went back to France on 23rd

1917 : Sept killed in action; buried where he fell; "he died nobly and gallantly"; memorial service at Mission Hall along with Albert Baxter & Horace Wesley

BULMAN, Ben

Suffolk Regiment

1916 : home on Leave February; went to front 6 May; killed in action, 16 Aug ES 15.9.1916 p8

CANHAM, Sidney

Suffolk Regiment

1915 : enlists, Suffolk Regiment ES 22.1.1915 p5

CHAPMAN, A W

Lance Corporal 1st Suffolk (Munster) Regiment

1916 : prisoner of war ES 14.1.1916 p3

CLARK, Abel

Bedfordshire Regiment

1915 : killed in action ES 5.11.1915 p8

CONSTABLE, Elijah

Private KSLI

1918 : wounded in head & in hospital in France, "is slowly improving" ES 27.9.1918 p8; picture ES 4.10.1918 p8

CONSTABLE, Leonard

Private, Suffolk Regiment, 2nd Battalion

1916 : wounded in chin, right arm & left leg & removed to hospital at the base; letter says is recovering ES 11.8.1916 p5

CONSTABLE, William Henry

Private Suffolk Regiment

1916 : home on leave, July; killed in action 18 August ES 8.9.1916 p8; picture ES 15.9.1916 p8

CREEK, Charles R

Corporal 1st Lincolnshire Regiment

1917 : killed in action 2.5.1917 - cemetery memorial; not named on war memorial

CROSS, Thomas

1918 : dangerously ill ES 10.5.1918 p8

DEWSBERRY, Eric

Private Suffolk Regiment

DEWSBURY, Alfred

Cameronian Regiment

DEWSBURY, A J

Gunner Royal Field Artillery

DIMMOCK, Bert

Lance/corp. 4th London Royal Fusiliers aged

career : Metropolitan Police Force, good athlete & cricketer; member of Stretham social, football & tennis clubs

1918 : March reported wounded and missing; hopes that he was a Prisoner of War in Germany

1919 : November officially announced as Killed – a year after war ended

comment : "highly respected", special article in Christian Police Association magazine; recorded as Rifleman in roll of honour

DRIVER, R

Rifle brigade

badly wounded; treasurer of Comrades ES 29.8.1919 p8

FLETCHER, T

Suffolk Regiment

1914 : called up, aged 47 ES 23.10.1914 p8

FROHOCK, T

Private Suffolk Regiment

1915 : in army 19 years, mostly in India; prisoner of war in Doeberitz Germany; ES 26.3.1915 p8

1916 : prisoner of war ES 14.1.1916 p3

GENT, James P

Rifle Brigade

1915 : enlists ES 8.10.1915 p8

HAZEL, Heber G

Private, Q. West Surrey

son of Harry Hazel, Tile House Farm

career : ploughman; refused exemption at military tribunal March 1916

Military service : 1916 December had narrow escape from death in recent advance; was knocked back into trench by shell bursting in front of him and buried with mud; mates with shovels dug him out; now in hospital

1918 : April killed in action on 13th; "a piece of shell entered his brain, killing him instantly; I was beside him when he died and trust you will find a consolation in knowing that he suffered no pain"

HITCH, Charles

Private

1916 : wounded & convalescing in Gloucester CIP 17.11.1916

HITCH, George

Private Cambridgeshire Regiment

1916 : missing (pic) ES 24.11.1916 p8

HOWARD, D

Private Suffolk Regiment

HOWE, Herbert

Lance corporal Sussex Regiment

served in South African campaign with RAMC

1915 : went out to France Sept

1916 : home on leave, June, returned 11th; killed in action ES 10.11.1916 p8

JARMAN, J W

Private

1917 : severely wounded, progressing favourably in hospital Denmark Hill ES 28.9.1917 p8

LANGFORD, Ben
Bedfordshire Regiment

LOWE, J
Suffolk Regiment

LOWE, Joseph William
Suffolk Regiment
son of Daniel Lowe
career : assistant at King's butchers, Ely
1916 : joined Suffolk Regiment on 18th May; went to France, November
1917 : died of pneumonia, January

LYTHELL, Edward
Private 13th Hussars
cartridge filler by trade
1914 : called up, August
1915 : dies of lockjaw as result of taxi accident -back tyre burst & cab overturned when going to football match in Birmingham, home on leave at time ES 14.5.1915 p8
not on war memorial

MASON, Thomas
Private 2nd Suffolk Regiment
1916 : prisoner of war, Doeberitz ES 14.1.1916 p3

MURFITT, Walter DCM
Sergeant The Sherwood Foresters
career : soldier, brilliant footballer with Stretham Hotspurs when on leave
1914 : had served 3 years in India when war declared and went over with first contingent;
1915 : saw severe fighting at battle of Neuve Chapelle "never seen a sight like it - the Germans attacked in masses, we lost the trenches for a few moments but they lost 11 men to one of ours. We lost a platoon officer and sergeant so I took the platoon to the trenches. I was recommended for conspicuous bravery. I'd been recommended before for fetching wounded men under heavy fire. I have seen terrible sights here & have lived with the Regiment for 3 days on half a biscuit but have done my duty"; July promoted to sergeant; August home on leave, all family gathered to meet him; October killed in action by shell fire and buried by comrades behind the firing line

PORTER, Charles
1916 : smallholder, no exemption ES 31.3.1916 p3
1918 : wounded & a prisoner ES 10.5.1918 p8

ROUTLEDGE, Alfred
Private
son of Rev A.R. Routledge
1914 : volunteered at start of war
1918: badly gassed in France, in hospital Leicester, slowly recovering ES 3.5.1918 p5 ES 10.5.1918 p8

ROUTLEDGE, Ernest Gordon

Royal Sussex Regiment

family : son of Pastor A.R. Routledge; 3 brothers had volunteered at beginning of war & father felt justified to retain this one

career : apprentice agricultural carpenter, not physically strong & was on Club; refused exemption on grounds of ill health by military tribunal January 1917 & appeal March 1917

1917 : joined army on 26th March; went to France on 20th June; killed 30th November

ROUTLEDGE, Percy W

8th Suffolk Regiment

son of Rev A.R. Routledge

1914 : volunteered at start of war; letter; training as signaller & hoping qualify as scout; but sorry only 5 village lads have so far joined up ES 6.11.1914 p8

ROUTLEDGE Russell C

Lance corporal

son of Rev A.R. Routledge

1914 : volunteered at start of war

1916 : awarded Military Medal ES 8.12.1916 p8; honoured for gallant conduct between 24th-29th September during Battle Thiepval ES 20.4.1917 p8

SADLER, J

Private 1st Suffolk Regiment

1915 : Prisoner of war ES 26.3.1915 p8

1916 prisoner of war Doeberitz ES 14.1.1916 p3

SCARROW, J B

Sergeant Major A.S.C.

SENNITT, Archie

Canadian Regiment

family : son of F.O. Sennitt

career : a carpenter; went out to Canada 1911 & joined Canadian forces at outbreak of war

1914 : joined Canadian n force at outbreak of war; Nov came to England & trained on Salisbury Plain; Dec visited parents in Stretham and spent Christmas

1915: went out to France April; May wrote home wishing he was able to be at Stretham Feast but was in the trenches; June shot in head and died instantly in neighbourhood of Ypres while supporting by rapid fire and attack; he had been with the platoon for 6 weeks & was a fine soldier. He was not in any pain as the few moments he did live he was entirely unconscious; "you will be glad to hear that he had a decent burial and I myself read the service. I am enclosing his personal effects & sending them to you. They were all he had on him at the time" - they included a pipe which his father had bought at a tobacconists shop in Ely and sent a short time before; July letters of sympathy written to father by Hon. E.S. Montagu, MP and Major G. Hughes, Minister of Militia & Defence Canada

1916 : February a letter of sympathy from Canada

comment "always bright and cheerful, his loss keenly felt by many in Stretham; it has cast gloom over this peaceful parish

SEYMOUR, Cyril

Private Royal Fusiliers

1917 : joined up June, in France, August

1918 : has seen much fighting, in action at start of German offensive March 21, being in party of Londoners mentioned for gallantry in holding a post while outnumbered 8 to 1; severely wounded in back & right thigh & now in King George's hospital, London ES 13.9.1918 p4

SINDALL, P

Private Suffolk Regiment

in army 19 years, mostly in India

1915 : reported missing, believed PoW, Germany ES 26.3.1915 p8

SPINDALL, J

Private 1st Suffolk Regiment

1916 : prisoner of war, Munster ES 14.1.1916 p3

STITT, George Marquis Stewart

Navy

family : son of Rector

1918 : enters navy ES 26.4.1918 p8; present at German fleet surrender ES 6.12.1918 p8

STITT, Innes D'Auvergue Stewart

2nd Lieutenant Queens Westminster Regiment

family : son of rector of Stretham

1918 : March reported missing after Regiment's heroic stand at Towey Post on March 28th; "B Company were holding a front line; Innes was there with me for the 3 trying days & still more tiring nights which preceded the attack. When the barrage started at 3 o'clock on the 28th I withdrew all my remaining men who were not absolutely indispensable at their posts to two deep dug-outs & sent the officers down there too. When the attack came at 7am everyone fought heroically. Innes was splendid, he stuck to me all the way through. When we had used all our bombs and nearly all our ammunition we went back to Naval Trench about 1,000 yards back. Innes was quite all right when I last saw him, unwounded and fairly fresh, but I had to leave them when I got back to Naval Trench as I knew I couldn't afford to lose much more blood & my revolver had been shot out of my hand". "I have discovered that he was wounded towards the end, but not seriously. Nobody who saw him wounded has survived, but his batman, since killed, told one of the few surviving NCOs of his platoon that he had seen Innes wounded, but not badly. So we are all hoping before long we shall have news of him from Germany"

STUBBINS, Joseph William

1st Canadian mounted rifles

1916 : wounded in eye - injured by splinter from a rifle grenade ... no cause for anxiety except for his eye
ES 26.5.1916 p8; eye removed ES 2.6.1916 p8

SWAN, George

Corporal

1916 : receives Military Medal for distinguished conduct 19-20 July during battle of Somme ES 15.12.1916 p8

SWAN, Herbert Law

Sergeant Royal Irish Rifles

family : son of Mrs Swan of the Post Office; 2 brothers in Army & one in Navy

1916 : joined army, March

1917 : February home on leave; killed in action, 2nd December ES 14.12.17 p8

TAYLOR, Edward John

Private Suffolk Regiment

1917 : previously reported missing, is now presumed dead ES 31.8.1917 p8

VALE, Edward

Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry

WESLEY, Albert George

Suffolk Regiment

1916 : home on leave June, back 24th; killed in action 8 Aug ES 1.9.1916 p5; pic ES 15.9.1916 p5

WESLEY, Horace

Private K.S.L.I.

1916 : horsekeeper, exempt till May 15th ES 21.4.1916 p3

1917 : memorial service ES 21.9.1917 p8

WHEELER, Jack D

2nd Lieut. Middlesex Regiment

family : son of A.G. Wheeler; brother Russell killed Dec 1916

career : assistant teacher at Silver Street school, Ely until war

1914 : soon after outbreak of war joined Cambridgeshire Territorials, went to France with 1st draft

1915 : severely wounded in both legs & taken to hospital in Brighton; when recovered joined OTC at Oxford & commissioned in Suffolk Regiment

1916 : May home on leave, left on 2nd, wounded 7th & now lying in base hospital abroad; July killed 31st; shot through head when leading men over German front line trenches which enemy holding with numerous machine guns. Buried that night just outside our lines. "One of the brightest & cheeriest lads with high purpose & kindly disposition. I saw him shortly before he died leading his men over German front line trenches & cheering them on"; September memorial service at church for him & brother; service impressive well attended & conducted by Rev Stitt

WHEELER, Russell M

2nd Lieut. Middlesex Regiment

family : eldest son of A.G. Wheeler; brother of Jack Wheeler, kia 1917

career : a brilliant scholar; BA & MA at Cambridge University & teacher at Cambridge & Harrow

1915 : 2nd Lieut., promoted temporary Lieutenant, Middlesex Regiment, November

1916 : killed in action 30th November; during unsuccessful German attack; death absolutely instantaneous & painless; had been in France 6 weeks; "his fearless and accurate reconnaissance enabled us to defeat the German attack last night & in fact the last decision he made in giving certain orders undoubtedly saved many lives. Everyone is terribly upset - I have never seen any officer show more coolness and keenness - this was the more remarkable as I judged him to be of a highly strung temperament"

1917 : September memorial service for him and his brother

WINTER, John P

Suffolk Regiment

1915 : enlists January; May reported "missing"; hope he in enemy hands (ES 16.7.15)

WRIGHT, John

Gunner R.G.A.

YARROW, Fred Victor

Rifle Brigade

1915 : enlists ES 8.10.1915 p8

YARROW, Owen

Private P.O. rifles

Appendix 18 Manor sale

MANOR – ABSTRACT OF TITLE AT SALE, 1926

- 1893, Dec 11 Selina Rose Catherine Lushington Tilson wills to Sir George Harry Smith Willis her moiety Manor – exec are Sir Geo. & Elizabeth and General Henry Beville;
- 1894 Jul 23 Will of George Harry Smith Willis, Ada Mary Willis his present wife, Eliza Angelina Willis his late wife
- Mrs Selina Rose Catherine Marsh Luddington Tilson, formerly Mrs Selina Rose Catherine Marsh – sister in law
- 1896 Mar 24 Selina Tilson dies
- 1899 Oct 21 Harry William Morgan Willis executor
- 1900, Oct 30 under will of Selina Tilson (made 11.12.1893) Sir George H.S. Willis had become entitled to remaining moiety of estates at Stretham
- 1901 Jan 23 G.H.S. Willis had died, H.W.M. Willis, eldest son had reached 21 (on 24 Oct 1896) – all Manor passed to him
- 1901 Jan 24 estates were subject to annuities, H.W.M. Willis was desirous of executing disentailing (breaking agreement that property remains within family) & conveyed Stretham Manor Estate to Sharon Grote Turner
- 1901 Jan 24 Sets up Trust : Harry W.M. Willis tenant for life
indenture Harry William Morgan Willis, Mary Ellen Willis (ne Gold) his wife & Charles Gold the younger – “The Trustees”
estates were subject to certain annuities charged thereon on his marriage it was agreed he should set up a trust Manor etc vested in the Trust
land to be for use H.W.M. Willis, his wife Mary Ellen Willis & to first and other sons; in default to use of John George Montagu Willis, 2nd son of Sir G.H.S.W. , to Audley Lionel York Willis, 3rd son, Percy Ayscough Willis, 4th son
Harry could change provisions
- Schedule lists property 1901
- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Farms | Tenant |
| Manor Farm | J.B. Dimock |
| Stow Bridge | J.B. Dimock |
| Berry green | C.L. Hazel |
| Tiled House | H. Hazel |
| Fidwell Fen | Alfred Driver |
| Railway | William Papworth |
| Chittering | T & J. Fairfield |
| Cricket field | T.G. Parish |
| Cottage & garden | F. Murfitt |
| | D. Lowe |
| | G. Dimock |
| | W. Russell |
| Parish pound | W. Russell |
| Mission Hall & house | C.R. Hurditch |
| River bank | C. Wright |
| Use of bridge | C. Wright |
| Easement over road | C. Wright |
- Also Letter F Farm, Littleport & Bottisham Fen Farm
- 1915, Sep 28 Dame A.M. Willis died
- 1916, Apr strip of land for a Military Road sold to Ely Rural Council for £195
- 1917, Feb small piece land sold Gt Eastern Railway for £10

1917, Oct	14a sold to Charles Wright, money invested in War Loan stock																										
1920, Jul 26	Philip Gold had died John B. Rosher & Frederick J. Mann appointed trustees in his place																										
1922, Jun 7	Minister of Agriculture charged inheritance fees with payment to Lands Improvement Company capital sum of £448 & interest at £35.13.0 half-yearly for 20 years from 24 Mar 1922 landowner : Harry MW.M. Willis, Stretham Manor Estate, total acreage 937a 1r 14p total rental £1,204.10.0 principal money secured £448, interest 5% for 20 years																										
1925	under Law of Property Act 1925 entirety of Stretham Manor Estates settled upon trust to Harry W.M. Willis as tenant for life																										
1926 Apr 14	Release with Harry W.M. Willis, a captain in Army, present landowner, agreed for redemption of improvement loan charge at price of £404																										
1926 Apr 14	Harry W. Morgan Willis as tenant for life recently contracted to sell to Sir Frederick Hiam the entirety of the estate for £40,000 (except Manor) & release it from annuities Schedule lists property at sale 1926																										
	<table> <tr> <td>Farms</td><td>Tenant</td></tr> <tr> <td>Stow Bridge</td><td>exec late J. Brown</td></tr> <tr> <td>Berry green</td><td>C.L. Hazel</td></tr> <tr> <td>Tiled House</td><td>H. Hazel</td></tr> <tr> <td>Fidwell Fen</td><td>C. Fairchild</td></tr> <tr> <td>Railway</td><td>J. S. Brown</td></tr> <tr> <td>Chittering</td><td>T. Fairfield</td></tr> <tr> <td>Cricket field</td><td>B. Parish</td></tr> <tr> <td>Hay Close, 20a.</td><td>Ely County Council</td></tr> <tr> <td>Double cottage in Cage Lane</td><td>Daniel Lowe</td></tr> <tr> <td>Cottage & parish pound in High St</td><td>G.W. Russell</td></tr> <tr> <td>Parish pound</td><td>W. Russell</td></tr> <tr> <td>Site of Baptist chapel</td><td>A.R. Routledge</td></tr> </table>	Farms	Tenant	Stow Bridge	exec late J. Brown	Berry green	C.L. Hazel	Tiled House	H. Hazel	Fidwell Fen	C. Fairchild	Railway	J. S. Brown	Chittering	T. Fairfield	Cricket field	B. Parish	Hay Close, 20a.	Ely County Council	Double cottage in Cage Lane	Daniel Lowe	Cottage & parish pound in High St	G.W. Russell	Parish pound	W. Russell	Site of Baptist chapel	A.R. Routledge
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	Also Letter F Farm, Littleport & Oily Hall Farm, Bottisham																										

Total acreage 1,621.878

Note Manor Farm & lands are not sold to Hiam

Note : document from Ted Langford 19 January 2000
SN155

Appendix 19

STRETHAM BOOKLIST & NOTES, by Mike Petty, edited for Stretham Millennium History 21 July 2000

Throughout my text I have included references to sources consulted. These take the form SN for 'Stretham Notes' or SB for 'Stretham Booklets' and relate to personal files I have at home
In abbreviated form they comprise:

Stretham Notes

- SN1 WESLEY FAMILY
- SN2 SAVIDGE FAMILY
- SN3 SENNITT FAMILY; G.P. SENNITT
- SN4 READ FAMILY
- SN5 CUNNINGHAM, W Common rights (more on SB110)
- SN6 PARNELL FAMILY
- SN7 PUBS & publicans; list 1891; History of Crown & White Lion history # Kelly's publicans list
- SN8 CUSTANCE FAMILY
- SN9 CEMETERY notes, "Of grave concern - life in the Cemetery
- SN10 CROSS - J.S.CLARKE illustration
- SN11 POLL BOOKS [transferred to SN200]
- SN12 POPULATION 1801-1961 & other villages
- SN13 Luke CURTIS , Routledge's house Read St; Bedlam Yard; Post Office
- SN14 Harry LOWE : notes on slides; George VAIL
- SN15 B. WRIGHT - index to Tape
- SN16 B. WRIGHT – Index of names; Shops; Wright; Blacksmith; Hudson; Parnell; Dyson; Dodson; Pikett; Post Office; Swan; Butcher; Baker; Gibbons; shoemaker; Ellwood; garage; Curtis; Routledge
- SN17 B. WRIGHT on shops; Stanley; undertaker; cemetery; war memorial; café; Newmarket Rd; Gautrey; pub; White Lion; Parish; Gotobed; Percy; hairdressers; Wesley; Green End; traction engines; Collins
- SN18 B.WRIGHT on photos: Lowe, carrier, Wood Lane; Johnson, Newmarket Rd; pond; Old West river; ferries; pubs; farming; harvest; school; rats
- SN19 B. WRIGHT on photos: windmill, Rose Cottage, Brook Lane; Ferry Bridge traction engines; High St; Bent's; Mission Hall, Newmarket Rd; Wright's house; Red Lion; Orchard House' Chapel St; Read's St; Mason; Spiritualism; Tollhouse, Wilburton Rd; ponds; Goads
- SN20 INCLOSURE MAP : Index locations plots, names Fields map 1836; Baber's part
- SN21 SOCIAL CLUB committee & minutes 1923-1935
- SN22 WAR MEMORIAL committee
- SN23 MAP locating Shops
- SN24 SLIDES INDEX # CEN NEGS
- SN25 SALES : newspaper refs
- SN26 THETFORD trades, history etc
- SN27 FARMERS from Kelly's Directories
- SN28 TOLL HOUSE
- SN29 READ ST house (Cobley)
- SN30 BROOK LANE House
- SN31 CHAPEL ST house; Chapel Square; Bonus
- SN32 WINDMILL history
- SN33 ELECTRICITY
- SN34 CREEK FAMILY
- SN35 CLARK FAMILY
- SN36 ROYAL OAK PUB & FERRY
- SN37 LANGFORD FAMILY
- SN38 CHURCH CHURCHYARD survey; Graves
- SN39 BOOK INDEX Stretham
- SN40 BLINCH DIARY 1860-1868, Index names
- SN41 1605 MAP FIELD INDEX
- SN42 KELLY'S DIRECTORIES 1847-1937 - shops etc
- SN43 MAPS : dates houses; street names
- SN44 CHURCHYARD graves index

- SN45 CEMETERY Graves index
- SN46 FEAST - history
- SN47 BOOKS : extracts on village
- SN48 PITCHFORD FAMILY
- SN49 CHARITY deeds; land; Manor Court
- SN50 ORCHARD HOUSE; READ FAMILY, WRIGHT FAMILY, GRANGER FAMILY
- SN51 PETTY, M.J. War Memorial history radio script
- SN52 presentation to Mrs B.C. STEVENS, 1990
- SN53 notes on Edward LOWE CARRIER notebook
- SN54 CHARLES FAMILY
- SN55 Henry Harvey BABER
- SN56 CAGE LANE House; Murfitt; Savidge; baker
- SN57 *ELY RURAL DEANERY MAGAZINE 1901 1902 - Stretham notes – now SB41*
- SN58 METHODIST chapel deeds; Chapel St
- SN59 SLIDES list Festival Talk 1990, 1988, Spires view April 1992
- SN60 DENTITY CARDS WAR 1914-1918 Soldiers (see SB44)
- SN61 SPY WAR 1939 notes
- SN62 HYLTON HOUSE, Top St deeds 1765-1909
- SN63 CLOCK subscriptions towards new - list names
- SN64 OBITUARY notes - extracts from papers - Thomas JACOBS in Lion Hotel, Cambridge - CIP
21.2.1936 Rev F.W. SAVIDGE CIP 4.10.1935 Chas WRIGHT 7.10.1898 Chas WRIGHT
30.4.1928; J HOPKINS retires 28.8.1943
- SN65 ELY STANDARD "From our old files" columns – notes
- SN66 M. PETTY, Stretham Chronicle index - expanded notes
- SN67 WISBECH STANDARD indexes 1889-1926
- SN68 CHURCH SPIRE 1928 repairs
- SN69 STITT, S.S. Origin of fetes, Stretham – ES 22 June 1934
- SN70 A Stretham pioneer : F.W. SAVIDGE work amongst head-hunters, ES 3.9.1934
- SN71 Stretham & the suffering ; FEAST parade successfully revived. ES 25.5.1934
- SN72 Addenbrooke's hospital scheme : annual meeting ES 9.11.1934
- SN73 death Walter GIBBONS ES 28.10.1934
- SN74 death George Edward CONSTABLE ES
- SN75 wedding J. Money of Wicken & Q. Langford – pic es 15.11.1935
- SN76 wedding C.O. Clarke & G. Stevens – pic ES 10.9.1937
- SN77 death Sarah Kate LANGFORD ES 10.1940
- SN78 death Albert Charles DRIVER – ES
- SN79 death James GIFFORD – ES
- SN80 CHARITY Minute book – notes, 1927-1966 & others
- SN81 Stretham in GT WAR : chronology 1914-1917, May
- SN82 BILLHEADS from Gibbons, 7.99 – includes H. COE, builder
- SN83 GT WAR biographical notes
- SN84 Stretham in porcelain, advert, Feb 1999
- SN85 Service of remembrance to mark 50th anniversary end WAR2
- SN86 Stretham ENGINE superintendent's imaginary log, chronology & notes
- SN87 Taylor. History of English general BAPTISTS of C17. 1818 – Stretham
- SN88 University Library sale particulars : 29 June 1865 : Gravel farm, Jacob's farm, ORCHARD HOUSE;
17 June 1911 : GRANGER's farm, Grunty Fen & Black Joe's close; 29 June 1893 : READ ST, occ
Thos Jacobs; 31 Jul 1884 : butchers, Thos Gotobed etc; 30 May 1867 : Brickmaker's arms pub; 19
Jul 1917 : Bridge House
- SN89 LOWE notes re Cage Lane, Berry Green etc
- SN90 Comparison Harrods directory 1873 & Kellys 1869-75 & others
- SN91 Notes on publicans
- SN92 Miss Feetham notes 29.2.1968
- SN93 Mrs Gibbons notes, Jan 1968
- SN94 Notes on individual streets
- SN95 1836 map : people mentions
- SN96 University Library : Western mss index, post 1500, Anderson room re Stretham

- SN97 R.G.Baker County of Cambridgeshire : sketch of Stretham part
- SN98 Newspapers to be checked for obituaries
- SN99 Top Street area : comparison 1836 & 1886 maps
- SN100 OS 1" map c1882 – sketch Stretham
- SN101 Hewitt notes on Haddenham
- SN102 CIP 30 August 1912 – floods in Ely district
- SN103 Extracts from various books etc
- SN104 MANPOWER SERVICES COMMISSION. Stretham documents list
- SN105 Cambridge SKEWER SYNDICATE. Names listed in ledger
- SN106 Eric DIMOCK – the man who planted tea on Ampa Tenang
- SN107 MURFITT FAMILY pedigree etc, 1993
- SN108 Stretham ponds – Sites scientific interest. 1965
- SN109 COUNTY RECORD OFFICE. Church registers deposited, 1991
- SN110 1991 census profile, Stretham
- SN111 C.O. Clark. The day Swaffham Fen gine broke down. 1972
- SN112 GUTTSMAN, W.L. The English ruling class. 1969 – notes on J.H. Sparke, RECTOR, 1815
- SN113 EAST CAMBS DISTRICT COUUNCIL. East Cambs local plan 1993 : Stretham map
- SN114 ELY STANDARD 27 Apr 1956. Importance of Stretham pliosaur STRETOSAURUS
- SN115 Notebook : THETFORD MANOR COURT land transfers 1752-1811, 1812-21; notes re PINDAR, FEN REEVE, DYKE REEVE # POUND; INCLOSURE AWARD 1835 : index to numbered plots; ROADS (typed up); CAMBRIDGE CHRONICLE extracts 1772-95; 1876 re CLOCK
- SN116 ALLOTMENT notes 1839-46
- SN117 Archive notes – VESTRY MINUTES 1833-74 cont to 1914
- SN118 NURSING ASSOCIATION minutes 1931-41 = SB36
- SN119 WAR II services HOMECOMING FUND minutes 1942-45
- SN120 CENSUS 1891 notes on streets
- SN121 CENSUS 1841 ENUMERATORS transcripts (Doig)
- SN122 CENSUS 1851 ENUMERATORS transcripts & surname index (kept with registers)
- SN123 CHURCH REGISTERS Burials 1558-1945 (Layng transcript)
- SN124 CHURCH REGISTERS Marriages 1558-1917; Banns 1759-1915(Layng transcript)
- SN125 CHURCH REGISTERS Christenings 1558-1861(Layng transcript)
- SN126 CHURCH REGISTERS Index (Layng transcript)
- SN127 GRAVESTONES inscriptions transcript, churchyard & cemetery, with index (kept with registers)
- SN128 ELECTORAL ROLL, 10 Oct 1998
- SN129 Stretham notes from notepads – clock, SANDYS
- SN130 Builders specification book re work on Rectory barn, new houses, school, toll houses 1841-77
- SN131 *ELY RURAL DEANERY MAGAZINE 1895-1909 (on cards) – some typed – now SB41*
- SN132 INDEX CARDS A-Z, also classified sequence, traders, field names etc
- SN133 PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES index cards
- SN134 Card index to people mentioned in various sources
- SN135 Card index to negatives
- SN136 Card index to slides
- SN137 Card index to Cambridge Chronicle stories
- SN138 DRIVERS & Drevers – notes on burials, marriages, inscriptions etc
- SN139 Sketch of church & cross 1837
- SN140 PETTY, M.J. Council election address, 1976
- SN141 Listed buildings – letter from Peter Tremlett, 1986 NEWSPAPER INDEXES AND EXTRACTS listed separately
- SN142 NEWSPAPER INDEXES AND EXTRACTS listed separately
- SN143 *ELY RURAL DEANERY MAGAZINE extracts 1914-18, 1920-47 now SB41*
- SN144 CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY photographic survey – copies
- SN145 Gentry – private residents from KELLY
- SN146 List of DIMOCKS listed in card index, 27.6.69
- SN147 J. Bennett, The fenland ark – extract
- SN148 Stretham RECTORS list

- SN149 SALES PARTICULARS notes
- SN150 SALES PARTICULARS, mainly modern
- SN151 1881 CENSUS ENUMERATORS notes & CD ROM
- SN152 STREET LIST & occupants
- SN153 CRO visit 5.1.2000 notes
- SN154 CUSSANS, J.E. History of Hertfordshire – WALKER
- SN155 MANOR FARM sale 1926
- SN156 HOUSE PRICES 1979-85 – in 1979 Red Diary
- SN157 Railway accident Stretham fen derailment, 1882 – Gt Eastern Jnl Apr 1983
- SN158 Contact, Jan 1985 re St Antony's Centre
- SN159 SANDYS family, Sands – extracts from Registers & DNB
- SN160 Extracts from Bishops notes etc – 1251 survey, Domesday
- SN161 WAILES, R. WINDMILLS in England. 1948 : notes on Stretham sails
- SN162 SANDYS memorial in church to wife of Thomas, died 1626
- SN163 W.COLE notes, transcribed from CRO copy & photocopy
- SN164 MANORS : chronological notes & WALKER & GOULD MORGAN owners
- SN165 Dame Mary WALKER – WILL 1691
- SN166 John WALKER – WILL 1760
- SN167 Walter WALKER draft family tree
- SN168 DNB extracts – GOULD, PARKER, WILLIS, RIDLEY
- SN169 BLOMEFIELD Collectanea Cantab – MEMORIALS
- SN170 GRAY, D.I. & NEALE, R.F.A. Eastern counties omnibus co – PARNELL
- SN171 WHITE LION deeds – from Jean Adamson 13 Jan 2000
- SN172 CAMBRIDGE INDEPENDENT PRESS. The parish council's act, how it works in Stretham
- SN173 CENSUS ENUMERATORS RETURNS 1881 : Lt Thetford
- SN174 Mike Petty survey of house prices 1979-1984
- SN175 Mike Petty Stretham chronology
- SN176 Deeds of The Pound, Bunkers Hill
- SN177 comparison between sources for early history – SB46, SB110 & SB89
- SN178 Ely Diocesan Board of Finance report on proceeds from sale Top School, July 1979
- SN179 A true terrier of the glebe and other lands, tenements ... of St James church, 18 July 1928 – notes
- SN180 Mill View House – notes from deeds
- SN181 Horatio ELLWOOD : draft notes for exhibition by Mike Allen & Ian Stevenson, January 2000 & other items
- SN182 Henry Hervey Baber : research notes by Nicholas Balmer, 2000
- SN183 PALMER, W.M. Episcopal visitation returns ... 1638-1665. Heffer.1930
- SN184 GRANGER FAMILY draft notes
- SN185 SCANS list of Stretham pictures
- SN186 KISBY, J. St James' church, Stretham : some extracts from the minutes of the Parochial church council 1922-1999
- SN187 DISPLAY ADVERTISEMENTS : F.H. Thurmott, Wesley & co., Spring Brewery
- SN188 THURLEY, C. Index of probate records of consistory court of Ely 1449-1858 : Stretham index. # WILLS
- SN189 TERRITORIAL FORCE ASSOCIATION. Report 1918 – mentions Stretham soldiers
- SN190 PROUD, S. Diaries : extracts, 1977
- SN191 BENT FAMILY : Family tree of Richard Bent & Ann
- SN192 Rectory
- SN193 Rectory ghost : notes
- SN194 40 most common names in Lt Thetford church records
- SN195 PARSONS' CHARITY, Ely; selections from documents. 1856 – lands at Stretham.
- SN196 Thomas Fletcher, attempt to prove settlement at Bourn, 1830
- SN197 COULTER, J. & ELLIS, K. Once upon a fen : a history of Stretham in music: programme. 1997
- SN198 rubbing of sketch of windmill in plasterwork at Rectory, taken 10.9.1997
- SN199 Geoffrey L Dimock, 50 London St, Swaffham – notes on Plantation House (rough)
- SN200 POLL BOOKS : Stretham voters, 1772, 1780 1 1826, 1830, 1831, 1832, 1835

SN201 GOAD FAMILY descendency chart, James S. Goad, b.1859

Stretham Books

- SB1 SAMUEL Rural sports. 1804
- SB2 THETFORD CHAPEL quarterly subscriptions 1843
- SB3 PIGOT, H. Resignation in bereavement: sermon. 1884
- SB4 STITT, S.S. History (typescript)
- SB5 TARLO, L.B. Stretosaurus ... a giant pliosaur. 1959
- SB6 LETHBRIDGE, T.C. Investigation ... causeway ... Thetford
- SB7 PEARCE Hoard of late Roman bronze coins from Stretham PCAS vol.39
- SB8 REPORT on bridge carrying road over Old West river near Stretham Engine 1976
- SB9 STRETHAM BOWLS club jubilee - history
- SB10 SADLER, Walter testimonials
- SB11 PETTY, M.J. Stretham : guide for exhibition 1968
- SB12 MILLER, E. That noble cabinet
- SB13 WELLS, C. Pathological .. Stretosaurus
- SB14 STRETHAM SOCIAL CLUB Committee Minutes
- SB15 STITT, S.S. The history of the parish of Stretham: reprint 1928
- SB16 GT BRITAIN. Department of the Environment. List of buildings ...
- SB17 FERRO CONCRETE ... Stretham bridge
- SB18 MCCLELLAND, A. A guide to Stretham church
- SB19 STITT, S.S. History ... photocopy
- SB20 WAR MEMORIAL unveiling programmes (2)
- SB21 CONSORTIUM DEVELOPMENTS Westmere outline plan
- SB22 CHARITY COMMISSIONERS report, 1838
- SB23 LICENCED houses return, 1907
- SB30 V.C.H. Cambridgeshire vol.4
- SB31 HILLS, R.L. Drainage by windmills in the Waterbeach Level.
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MAPS

1576	Saxton's map of Northants, Beds, Cambs. Hunts & Rutland
1604	An exact copy of a plans of the fens as was taken 1604 by William Hayward ...copied 1727
1695	Cambridge shire; engraved by Sutton Nichols, pub'd Camden's Britannia
1836	Englosure
1888	OS 25"
1902	OS 25" sheet xxix.12 – Red Hill & Wilburton Manor
1902	OS 25" sheet xxx.10 – Fish & Duck
1902	OS 25" sheet xxx.13 – Stretham engine
1926	OS 25" sheet xxx.5 – Thetford corner & Grunty fen railway
1926	OS 25" sheet xxx.6 - Barway
1926	OS 25" sheet xxx.9 – Stretham
1950	OS 6" map
1955 (1960)	OS 2½ sheet TL47 – Willingham - Wilburton
1955 (1960)	OS 2½ sheet TL56 – Horningsey – Burwell
1955 (1960)	OS 2½ sheet TL57 – Stretham - Soham
1975	new map of Ely – Mike Young
1989	OS 25"

Stretham Street History by Mike Petty

Note : an illustrated version of this section is included in the folders held by the Parish Council
revised 21.7.2000

AKEMAN CLOSE

A development of council bungalows, named in 1966 after Akeman Street, the Roman road. An additional private estate of houses and bungalows was built in 1985

ANDREWS CLOSE

see King Cob

BACK LANE

The back way to the church; Miss Feetham remembered an old barge upside down, in Ten Acre field

BERRY CLOSE

Council houses estate built c1954

Ash Place

A private development; houses were advertised for sale July 1983 from £19,950 [SN174]. Formerly the site of a tumbled down cottage & Buckingham's timber yard, a depot for railway sleepers, timbers, poles, stakes and sectional buildings which were made to order

The Crofters

see separate entry

Akeman Close

see separate entry

BERRY GREEN

First post 2nd war council housing estate developed despite Parish Council opposition, they preferred development in Brook Lane. The estate was named in 1952 [SN133]

Berry Green Farm

The present bungalow replaced an old farm house, c1970. Formerly home to Langford Hazel [FOM p66]. A range of wooden buildings including a listed barn on the approach to the cemetery was demolished c1985. This was representative of the large number of timber-framed barns associated with the farms of the parish. It may have been associated with a large farmhouse possibly dating from the 17th century which is thought to have been sited across the present route of Wood Lane. (Davis p2,12) .

Cemetery

see separate entry

BROOK LANE

Previous Names: Back Street 1851 & 1891 census; Brook's Lane 1841 census; Brook Street 1841; Plantation Road 1841, 1851; Brook Street was renamed Brook Lane in 1950 [SN133]

East side

Nos.1-2: council bungalows built on the site of Rose Cottage Farm, an old thatched cottage, home to George Perry Sennitt. The farm extended up toward the Baptist chapel with a high wall separating it from Read's Street. It had large sheds bigger than many houses. The garden at the back was laid out with box hedges & roses. Perry Sennitt supplied Cambridge market with hens and turkeys, using local produce. In 1897 he sent 7 tons of poultry from Stretham station. [EWN 1.1.1897] He died March 1914 [SN3]

Plantation Gate

see separate entry

No.5

The Inclosure Award, 1837, describes the plot as a house and homestead occupied by William Camps. Other members of the family were millers and 'Camp's White Mill' stood along Mill Drove. On the Northern side of the cottage are the remains of a thatched barn SN30

No.7

Plot 39 on Inclosure Award occupied by John Russell; In the 1960s Leslie Dyer bred rabbits, ferrets and polecats, developing it into a thriving business. [CN 9.2.68] The two cottages and building land were sold in 1973 [ES 11.1.73]

Meadowcroft

see separate entry

BYPASS

Opened 1964, the roundabout replaced a triangular junction which was a frequent site of crashes.

CAGE LANE

Previous Name: Bents Lane – 1851 Census

Named after the village lock-up or cage where unruly people were kept. It was demolished in 1855, subsequently became the site of the Mission Hall and is now a garden. See notes under Newmarket Road. [SN117].

Benzley Wright remembered when Cage Lane had a shoe repairer, scabbard maker, a barber & shoemaker, a coal business, a baking business, and storehouse, within 100 yards [BW SN19]. Mrs Stevens mentions that Mark Howe a chimney sweep lived in a small cottage in Cage Lane [FOM p77]

A report in the Cambridge Chronicle of 15th November 1845 reports that while people were in church or chapel on a Sunday evening the alarm of fire was heard, causing considerable panic as they dashed from the services. A house in Bent's Lane was ablaze and the flames quickly spread to another thatched cottage. There was little water but the crowds managed to save some of the furniture from each cottage. The blame was laid on the wife who had gone upstairs with a candle to fetch her bible, whilst reading this with another woman they noticed the fire, and found the bed alight

East side

No.5

Formerly the site of an ivy-covered bungalow and small shop where in the 1920s Isaac Asplin did hair cutting and shoe repairing at the house of his sister, Sally Sennitt. SH13 [BW SN16.13 FOM p6,74]

No.9/11

Was advertised for sale in July 1982 at £34,500 [SN174]

West side

No.2

Formerly connected with the Wesleys engineering works, Green End. A fire hook used to hang on the walls of a barn that occupied the corner site

No.4

The Inclosure Award for Stretham dated 1837 shows the property as a tenement and garden occupied by Abraham Murfitt, a butcher. In October 1850 his barns caught fire. He died in 1889 aged 89. By 1892 it was a bakery owned by Briggs Savidge & continued in his family. By 1929 it was operated by his grandson Alan Caesar Savidge. By 1933 Russell Routledge had taken over. The last person to use the property as a bakery is thought to be a Mr Hayward. [SN56, FOM p21]

CAMBRIDGE ROAD

Although a Roman road, Akeman Street, formerly connected Cambridge and Ely this had fallen into disuse by the 11th century & the main route between Cambridge & Ely was via the Aldreth Causeway. The present road from Ely to Cambridge was started in 1754 by Bishop Mawson & completed by 1783. A bridge was constructed, replacing the former ferry which crossed further along the river near the site of the "Wooden Bridge", Green End. The original bridge was single width with alcoves and was very steep, farmers needed to put extra horses on their carts to pull them over. Parts of the remains of the old bridge can be seen beside the replacement bridge which was constructed in 1925. The strength of this new bridge was tested by placing traction engines on it in July 1925. It carried all traffic along the A10 until a new bridge was constructed and the road realigned in 1976

Under a Turnpike Act gates were erected at which the tolls would be taken for horses, carriages & (until 1837) for foot passengers each time they passed through. The Turnpike Gate was later moved from the bridge to the site of the present filling station and restaurant. Tolls were abolished in 1874 with the gates and houses being pulled down & removed.

Royal Oak & Lazy Otter

In 1797 the pub, then known as The Charles in the Oak was to let. It was described as being "old & well established" and nobody need apply unless they could raise between £150 and £200 and understood fen shooting and fishing. In 1844 the pub was destroyed by fire, suspicion rested on a travelling salesman of lucifer matches who had been turned away by the landlord. By 1851 the rebuilt pub was put up for sale. Substantially built of brick & slate it had 4 brick & tiled lodges, stables & a farmyard. It was offered with adjoining land which contained 'an inexhaustible supply of brick earth' & made £2,700. It was sold again in 1895 [SN142]

By 1906 the Royal Oak, described as fully licensed, was owned by Jabez Parnell of Ilford, the lessees were Bailey & Tebbutt of the Panton Brewery Cambridge & the licensee William Henry East. It contained two bedrooms for the family & two more for lodgers or travellers, had stabling for 6 horses & 3 vehicles; the licensee was also a farmer with 9½ acres.

The most famous person associated with the 'The Royal Oak' was King Charles. Charles was the surname, King his Christian name. The family's gravestones lie near the entrance to the church porch. Other publicans include Dyson Parnell, Edward Marshall, William Cornwall, William Easy, William Jarman & Samuel Rowell. In 1959 Bill & Joyce Burgess became landlords until they retired in 1981 [SN175]. It was bought by Bill Morgan and sold again 1986. The old pub closed and was redeveloped and reopened as the Lazy Otter in April 1987 [SN175 FOM p34]

Cottages opposite the Royal Oak were demolished after being damaged by a bus in December 1962

Grange Farm

From the 1850s it was owned by the Granger Family. Subsequent farmers included Henry Lister John Dimmock & Sidney Smith. The farmhouse was subsequently destroyed by fire.

Elford Farm

Earthworks at Elford Farm are thought to be a fortification established during the Civil War to guard this approach to the island of Ely. The farm & 108 acres were auctioned, September 1985 [SN174]

Westmere

Plans for a new town to be built on land between Stretham and Wilburton were announced in December 1986. They were promoted as an answer to the continuing demand for additional housing, and were supported by local politicians & planning officials. The parish councils of Stretham and Wilburton voiced the only opposition to the plans on behalf of virtually all the villagers. In 1988 Consortium Developments, a partnership of major housing developers announced plans for a smaller settlement and details of "Westmere" were unveiled at Christmas 1988 [SB21]. Despite constant lobbying the revised County Structure Plan of 1989 still advocated the scheme. Matters came to a head in 1991 when three separate proposals were considered at a major planning enquiry at Ely, where members of the Wilburton & Stretham Parish Councils combined to present their case alongside highly-paid barristers and experts retained by the Development Companies. The Inspector's report supported the Parish Councils' case and rejected the Westmere proposals. The battle against the big bad developer was taken as the basis of the village pantomime, but in truth had been no laughing matter, involving a number of people in a very great deal of time and effort. In 1993 the Westmere plan resurfaced though by now it was opposed by East Cambridgeshire District Council, who had formerly supported it

Petrol Station and Café, formerly the Black and White Café

Probably established on the site of the former Turnpike Gate. It was advertised in the 1950s/60s as the Black & White Café, a 'highly valuable transport and general café business established & in present ownership over 21 years'; the café had room for seating 28 people & it had living accommodation in rear [SN150]. From the early 1970s was kept by John and June Tester and

known as June's Café. It was included in the Egon Ronay guide to Transport Cafes in 1975. A detached luxury bungalow was built on the site in 1977. By January 1980 it had a new workshop, petrol pumps and café and was on sale for £70,000. [SN150] Attempts to expand the business and establish caravan & car sales met with opposition and the site was subsequently redeveloped into the present filling station with AJs restaurant opening in April 1988 [SN175]

A grass-track racing course was established about 1984 [SN175]

Ideson's Garage

Established by Edgar Stevens as a filling station and for car repairs in 1930, subsequently purchased by Herbert Ideson selling Lada, Yugo & currently Daewoo cars

Council Houses were constructed from 1921 with a new bypass road opened in 1928 [SN65]. This took traffic away from the present Short Road and led down to a triangular road junction with Wilburton Road. The existing roundabout and bypass opened in 1964.

CEMETERY

A Burial Board was established & in 1886 purchased a one-acre plot at Berry Green for £400 after which the churchyard was closed for burials. The site was divided into church and nonconformist areas. The first burial was in January 1887, a baby Charles Albert Charles, aged 11 weeks whose parents were worried about it being up there on its own. As early as 1947 there were concerns that it would run out of space. In 1972 it was agreed to rebury in the oldest part of the cemetery. The cemetery shed was formerly used to store tools used by the gravediggers. It has been used for a funeral service.

The War Memorial was unveiled in November 1921; an obelisk made of rough hewn grey Cornish granite it was erected in the Cemetery following opposition to the preferred site at the entrance to Pump Lane. Subsequently a second memorial was erected in the churchyard. [SN17.14]

CHAPEL LANE

Previous names : Lowe's Lane 1891

The lane formerly contained a number of thatched properties. In 1814 some were purchased to erect a Methodist chapel which was subsequently extended – see separate notes

The posts in the Lane have been there since well before 1897, when the Parish Council voted to leave them in place [SN133]. Houses a telephone exchange.

Nos.2-14

Starter homes erected on the site of Alfred Routledge's carpenter's workshops – see Read Street no.20

CHAPEL STREET

Previous names : Middle Street, Red Lion Street until 1950 [SN133]

East side

Orchard House

Grade 2 listed house, built for members of the Read family; see separate notes on architecture by Beth Davis & the Read family

No.1

Formerly the site of the boys' school until 1872. In 1874 the Charity converted it into two tenements for two poor widows [SN49]. It became an almshouse, with a line of small dwellings behind. These were condemned in 1939 but were used to house evacuees during World War II. In 1951 it was included in a draft list of buildings of special interest but subsequently removed. The last tenant moved out in 1969 and the site was sold by the Charity [SN80]. The old buildings were converted to a private house. It became the Doctors' surgery in 1987 [FOM p125]

No.5

Site of a house built between 1662 & 1667 for Anne, sister of Sir Christopher Wren. She had married Dr Henry Brunsell, Rector of Stretham. It was built in a red brick and had two entrances from the street, approached by steps as the building was raised over a cellar. It was of two storeys with a rear stair turret and hipped roof. The reused brick and one coin of the north west wall remains in the garden wall of the replacement building. [Davis p19,22]

By the 1850s it was two houses. Benzley Wright lived there between 1938 and 1952 when part of the building was a butcher's shop. The door from the butcher's shop led into their kitchen. They had two big front rooms and three big bedrooms. In one bedroom there was a cupboard big enough to get a bed in, where the serving girl slept. There was one big old garret at the top in which there was an old wicker cradle. At the back there was a well & pump. It was said the pump produced sufficient water to serve the whole village, drawing its source from springs, which came across from White Cross Hill. Other residents included John Sennitt, the village crier [FOM p1]. Later part of the property was used by Jack Edwards for his electricians business before he built a new shop opposite the Parish Room. The house was demolished in the 1960s for the present property. [FOM p20]

No.7

Formerly a blacksmiths business, kept by W.E. Hudson (died February 1921) [SN175] & subsequently Lowe & Crow who retired in 1958 [SN65]. Behind the blacksmiths shop was an open shed to keep a car or cart in & then a slaughterhouse. It became the Smithy garage in 1967 kept by Alf Hemmings [BW SN16 FOM p51] and was subsequently demolished for the present house.

No.9

A house formerly on the site was burnt down in October 1929 after a firework was thrown on its thatched roof [SN142]. Benzley Wright recalled that Fred Sennitt kept a shop in a room in the house where he sold tea, cheese, paraffin & matches. The big window held a conglomeration of goods. [FOM p12]

No.11

Formerly thatched. The room nearest the road was used by James & Walter Gibbons, shoemakers. The leather was thick and the shoes guaranteed watertight for two years, weighing about 71b a pair when they were done. Repairs were also done on the premises & the old men used to congregate there as a sort of club. The house remained the home of the Gibbons family until the death of Peter Gibbons in 1999 [FOM p76].

Middle Close was built as starter homes in 1993

No.17

Shown on the Inclosure Award as a tenement and garden belonging to Russell Blinch running from the corner of Chapel Lane up Chapel Street. On the first 25" Ordnance Survey map, 1886, the property is shown as three houses facing Chapel Square. It may have been built following a fire in October 1850 which started in Home Farm and spread along the opposite side of the road, burning down three cottages belonging to Mrs Blinch along with several others.

No.19

Former **Methodist Chapel** opened in December 1886 succeeding an older building in Chapel Lane. The architect was Thomas Gunton, the builders James Lofts & Sons of Ely and it was acclaimed to be one of the prettiest in the area. The chapel closed in 1987 [PCC], was for sale in March 1990 [SN150] & subsequently converted to a private house and design studio. See separate notes

No.21

Sold under the will of Stephen Read in 1880 when it was described as a double tenement occupied by Samuel Coy & the Wesleyan Chapel committee [SN149].

No.23

Formerly the **White Horse** public house described as "newly erected" at a sale in February 1851 [Ch]. By 1906 it was owned by Greene King & sons & had been kept by Mrs Mary Moden for 9 years. It had stabling for 3 horses and 2 vehicles and one room for lodgers. [SB23 FOMp30]

No.25

Formerly a grocer's shop kept by Ada Leach whose husband Syd was a village handyman & one of the first owners of a car in the village. Later it was kept by Miss Stanley, then Mrs Cope & finally by Mrs Lilian Pikett till she retired in 1963. There was a sign on the wall advertising the sale of stamps which were sold to oblige her customers when the Post Office was at Swan's. Benzley Wright recalled how about 1908-9 he went into shop at 8.30 at night & bought 12 sweet cigarettes for a penny, in a wooden box. There was no actual closing time, & shops opened as they wished. [BW SN16.6, FOM p9]

Chapel Street / Newmarket Road junction flooded in 1912 when much of the lower end of the village was under water. It continues to flood from time to time since the Newmarket Road is that much higher and water cannot easily escape.

West side

No.2 : **Home Farm**

A late 16th century farmhouse, one of two examples of buildings which were originally homes of the rising middle class, often called yeomen, who may have been merchants dealing with commodities from their land or local markets. The timber frame is built in the carpentry tradition of East Anglia and the quality of the timber is good [Davis p23]. Renovation work in the 1990s revealed extensive burning, probably from incendiarism in the 1850s. In October 1850 a straw stack belonging to Edward Dimock at Home Farm was set on fire and before the flames could be extinguished they spread to all other stacks in the yard and to a large barn. The fire then extended to three cottages on the opposite side of the road, which were all consumed. Four more were burnt but Home Farm itself was saved. Home Farm was the final home of the Hazel family, who moved into the village from Tiled House Farm. It was for sale by auction in March 1985 [SN150] & subsequently restored by Mrs E. Veal

The former coach house has a plaque ED. 1843, commemorating the Dimock family

Barn, listed Grade 2, now derelict and scheduled for conversion is mid 19th century in date, built in brick with a central cross entry and short rear outshot. Later in the 19th century it was extended to the road with a coach house and hayloft [Davis p23].

The farmyard seems not to have been redeveloped since the incendiarism of the 1850s. Planning permission was obtained in 2000 for a house on the site

The Census returns for 1851 report that five properties were then being built on both sides of the road.

THE CROFTERS

Private housing development to the north of Berry Close which won an electricity energy efficiency award, 1986 [SN175]. The Parish Council objected to the choice of the estate name since it had no connection with village history

ELY ROAD

East side

Play area

Site of former Pitch Pond filled in from 1963 [SN133]; developed as a children's play area as the result of an initiative of a group of mothers 1975 [SN175]. Extensively renovated, with safety surface & new equipment, by the Parish Council, June 2000

Nos.2-36

Erected as council houses between the wars; the first batch were built in 1928 [SN132]

Quarterway House

Formerly a public house, owned in 1906 by William Cutlack, Littleport Brewery & kept by John Martin. [SB23] The old house was demolished by a lorry, in October 1993 [SN175] and subsequently rebuilt further away from the road.

West side

No.1 : The Pound

Incorporates part of the site of the parish Pound, where straying animals were kept. The area was known as "Bunkers Hill" after the battle in the American Civil War in 1775. A Stretham man was thought to have been killed and his village property sold off, when he returned he was given a cottage which he named after the battle. It was bought by Sir Fred Hiam in 1926 on the break-up of the Manor Farm estate and sold off as a private house.

No.3 & 5

When newly built 1968 were priced at £4,550, by 1975, 7 years later, the price had risen to £12,975. The Windmill Day Nursery opened in 1992 & ran for seven years [SN175].

No.7

Formerly site of a prefabricated wooden bungalow demolished in the spring of 1970

Windmill

Originally the site of a post mill, with another known as Camps White Mill along Mill Drove. In 1795 a letter sent to the miller, Edward Dimock, threatened that if he raised his prices the mill would be burnt down. At a sale in 1845 it was described as a capital post windmill with 2

tenements, the mill working 2 pairs of stones with gear & tackle. It was complete standing on the hill at the entrance to the populous & improving village of Stretham & in the occupation of William Bultitaft. It was rebuilt as a tower mill in 1880 & is thought to be the last mill constructed in the county. The fantail was shattered in a storm in February 1906 [SN175] An oil engine was later installed in a shed on the site. It was a working mill until 1936. The sails were removed during the Second World War when it was used as an Observer Corps post. An underground nuclear blast shelter some 15 feet deep with walls up to 4 feet thick was constructed on the site in the 1960s. After standing disused for some years planning permission for conversion to residential use was obtained in July 1973. It was converted into a house by Paul Hendrich in 1975 [SN150].
Millers included : William Jackson, 1835, William Bultitaft 1847-1869, Mrs Jane Bultitaft 1873-1888, William Bultitaft 1892-1908, Hubert Murfitt 1912, Albert Lawrence 1916-1933
[FOM p100]

No.17 : Hill Farm

Farm was owned by the Church Commissioners. Farmers included Bill Sennitt & the Goad family. Routledge & Goad moved their corn merchants' premises from Top Street, about 1979 and this has developed into the existing industrial storage units [FOM p68].

FIELD SIDE

Private estate for which planning permission was approved in 1969 on an area of ground, where Miss Young used to have a poultry farm. Four bungalows were for sale, August 1979 priced at £31,750 [SN174]. In April 1985 two luxury detached bungalows were being built at £42,500 [SN150].

GREEN END

Pervious names: Green End 1841, 1851, Strong Beer Baulk

The Green End area was swept by incendiary fires in 1859, 1861 & 1862. In March 1859 fire destroyed three thatched clay-built cottages. Samuel Parish recorded in his diary: "Matthew Sargent had a pig burnt. He turned the pig out and it ran into the firing lodge and was burnt to death but the pigsty was saved. His house was burnt, the widow Gibbon's house too. This was on Sunday 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning".

Then in July the farm premises of William Blinch was consumed, the fire starting in a straw stack. In September 1861 the incendiaries struck again A thatched cottage belonging to John Bent in Green End, an area covered by a very dense mass of old buildings, was set on fire. It spread until seven cottages and a barn were destroyed. Fire fighting was hindered by a strong wind, a lack of water and a large crowd of onlookers who took no part. In January 1862 two cottages burnt down and two more were pulled down to prevent further spread of the flames – it was definitely arson. Next month three thatched tenements caught fire, the cause was not traced. The third fire broke out in June when the back part of an old cottage caught fire, once more arson was suspected. Subsequent rebuilding may have realigned the road on its existing route. Previously the line of the road ran further to the west, in front of two houses which are now approached down a lane.

East side

Allotments see Newmarket Road

West side

Nos.1a-1d

Built about 1980 [SN175] on the site of Wesley's barns, part of their skewer and traction engine works (see Appendix 14).

Nos.2-3

The plaque HGC 1903 commemorates that they were built by Canon Cockshott for his daughter Henrietta, 1903, one for her to live in, the other to rent.

King Cob, The Grove, Andrew's Close

see KING COB

In this area Mrs Sennitt the carrier lived & Russ Sennitt the cobbler worked in a small lean-to shed [FOM p41, p80]. Clark Murfitt lived in a double-fronted house next door to Mrs Sennitt. He had an orchard, the fruit was taken to Cambridge market. There was a dairy at the back from which he sold butter & skimmed milk [FOM p87]

No.8

Formerly **New Red Lion** pub. In 1906 it was owned by Cutlack's Littleport brewery and had been run for the past 15 years by George Lowe Sennett. It was bought by F. Dale in April 1920 when it was part of Knight's Brewery [SN175]. The pub was convenient to those who worked in fen or on allotments [FOM p33].

No.15

Cottages back from road along alignment of the former lane

Nos.17-21

Built on the site of a house described as "newly erected" in 1837 that had been in the Clark family since the 1840s. A single dwelling was approved as a replacement and subsequently additional properties were constructed on land considered by the Parish Council to be outside the development envelope [SN175]

The road continues, passing a field on the right formerly known as King Cob, and running through the site of a Roman villa. Everitt's or Middle Common Drove marked the boundary of Beggars Bush field, said to be where tramps gathered before coming into the village at night-time. In 1864 the road was used by 100 men and small farmers every day and the mud was knee deep [CH]. This situation may have been exacerbated by the coprolite diggings south of Everitt's Drove where there is archaeological evidence of Roman settlement.

Beth Davis reports that a ditch running along the East side of Green End was once wide enough to have been used as a lode carrying barge traffic to a dock area on the allotment site. (See section on Newmarket Road). The historical significance of this road is open to debate and other opinions may appear elsewhere in this Millennium History.

Bridge House

Formerly Strong Beer House; In 1851 William Charles was farming at the Strong Beer House beside the Wooden Bridge in Green End. The pub was sold in 1917 [SN149].

"Wooden Bridge"

The first bridge, known as the Wooden Bridge had been built before 1777 by Sir Charles Gould, Lord of the Manor. Charles Cole records "It was in this place, Base Lake, that the Roman Road leaving Denny Abbey to the west, passed over the Ouse. Dr Stukely traced it through the morass on

both sides of the river and the late Mr Duntborne did the same. At what time this road was deserted is not known, but whenever it was the owner of the ferry, where Mr Stanley's Ferry-House now stands, removed the ferry to that, where it hath continued ever since until it was taken away by Turnpike" [SB58]. A new ferry was erected in 1607 by Sir Miles Sandys who erected "one cottage at the new intended ferry, allowing tenants the price of ferryage as they have enjoyed at the old ferry" [SB46]. The river is crossed by a new bridge replacing one rebuilt in 1978 after two years of closure because the wooden deck was rotten. It had previously been repaired by Hiams in 1955 [SB8].

Engine House

Grade 2* listed building housing a preserved steam-powered beam engine constructed in 1831 to drain the Waterbeach Level. See separate notes on drainage.

Diesel Engine House

Built to house a Mirrlees, Bickerton & Day diesel engine which replaced the steam engine in draining the Level.

Stoker's Cottage

Grade 2 listed cottage probably erected as a tollhouse taking tolls of barges haling along the river bank; now restored and forms part of the Stretham Engine complex.

Stowbridge Farm

Farm owned by the Lord of the Manor, sold in 1926 to Sir Fred Hiam who owned it until 1989 when his estate was wound up. It is now farmed by the Palmer family

THE GROVE

see King Cob

HAY FEN CLOSE

see Read's Street

HAZEL COURT

see Top Street

HIGH STREET NORTH (nos.1-21, 2-26)

Previous names: Front Street 1841, 1851; Main Street 1841; High Street 1891

The 1891 census reports: "Main Street is now commonly called High Street & High Street is now Top Street"

East side

Walnut Tree Close

Private estate advertised for sale by Caspian Homes in January 1995 with additional housing by Hereward Housing Association [SN150]. The estate was built on the site of a paddock belonging to Oakley House. It includes the site of a former garage used during WWII by the village contingent of the National Fire Service

Barns formerly belonging to Oakley House. They were erected following the fire of 1844 & have now been converted into houses.

West side

No.2 : Mill View House

Probably constructed just before 1851 for William Charles, a farmer who had retired from Green End.

No.4 : The Haven

Once home to Jabez Parnell, a Baptist minister who spent many years in London. He came to Stretham in 1911 and when he was 74 took up motorcycling, riding to London and back at weekends. He was also a keen skater. His great love was his garden which always looked a picture [CDN 30.4.1925]. The house was put up for sale by his executors in 1928.

No.14

Formerly a Police house with a blue Police lamp outside

No.18 : Akeman House

Formerly the **Spring Brewery** owned by William Sennitt who delivered their beer by horse direct to farmers and owners of big house who had their own cellars. After the brewery ceased to exist was home to George Dimock & then Holland Rose Porter who had a collection of curios brought from India. It became a dusty museum, a veritable treasure house. He gave the property the name Akeman House. After his death it was put up for sale in July 1939 but was withdrawn at £290 [SN142 FOM p36]

No.20

Formerly the brewery off licence & used by the Baptist Chapel while their building was redeveloped in 1935. It has the initials JG on the side.

No.22

A small building, rebuilt in 2000 as a garage, was formerly Fred Curtis' boot repair shop. Subsequently George 'Pudden' Dimock started a hairdresser business in 1929, later selling second-hand books & other items, the stock overflowing on to the pavement. He died in 1986 [FOM p76]

No.24

Formerly Walter Tyrrell Rayner's carpenter and wheelwright premises where he made farm carts. He died 1939; the family had been in the village 300 years. The business was taken over by P. Bysouth [SN98 142 FOM p55]

HIGH STREET CENTRAL (nos.23-55, 26-40)

East side

This side of the street from the corner of Top Street to number 41 was devastated by the fire of 1844

No.23-27

Formerly **Swan's** general stores built following the 1844 fire on a site known as Bedlam Yard. They sold grocery & drapery - trousers, women's knickers, vests, calico, wool, boots & shoes, table mats, handkerchiefs, sweets, biscuits, starch, and paraffin. It was also the village post office until 1920 [SN142]. On Swan's retirement the shop was taken over by their long-time assistant and deliveryman Charlie Watson who was succeeded by his daughter & son-in-law, Ruth & Lewis Holliday in 1972. The shop closed in January 1990 [FOM p13]

No.35

Formerly a blacksmith's shop, then the home of the Acred family who feature in "Feast of Memories". It was used as the Doctor's consulting room for 73 years until July 1987 when Dr Richard Wolfendale retired. The first was Dr C.W. Howe, who previously saw patients at the Red Lion. He was succeeded by Dr J.W. C. Fairweather. At first the prescriptions were delivered to the

house by the village postman, Isaac Asplin, then the Ortona Bus Service took over. Hundreds of people used Cynthia & May Acred's front rooms when waiting to see the doctor or called at all hours to collect medicines [FOM p51 SN175].

No.37

Former **Royal Standard** pub with its own brewery, owned in 1906 by Morgans Brewery of Norwich and kept by George Emmerson. It was the last property to be consumed by the 1844 fire and has a date plaque on the end wall. Later it was used as offices for Eric Wright's coal business who by 1973 had a fleet of 13 lorries. Their yard extended back to encompass the listed barn behind it.

Fronting the street was a small shop used by Joe Garner as a butcher's shop; the business closed and the shop was sold in August 1967 [SN150]. It then became part of the coal business & was later demolished to make access to the listed barn behind it

No.41

Listed 18th century red & gault brick barn; has the initials TIA on the side. Its steeply pitched roof was covered with corrugated iron and the gutted interior used for storing coal for many years. It has now been renovated and converted into a house.

No.43

Renovated after being badly damaged by fire in 1992 this house used to have a fire plaque, as a reminder that it had survived the 1844 fire. From here Thomas Parnell operated a coal business for about 40 years, having previously worked in the Yorkshire coal mines. The business passed to his son, J.C. Parnell who bought a lorry and installed a petrol pump in front of the house. He initiated a bus service, initially putting seats in the coal lorry, then bought an old London bus & by 1922 had built up a small fleet. He sold the buses to Ortona Omnibus Company in 1926 [SN170,175 FOM p29 35 46]

No.45 : **Post Office**

Formerly Luke Curtis' shop. It was sold as part of the Orchard House estate in 1867 when it was bought by Briggs Savidge. He rebuilt and enlarged the premises - hence the inscription BS 1868 on the front of the building. He sold drapery & groceries, with bread baked on the premises. He also expanded & built the Post Office in Ely but his business failed in 1897 and the Stretham shop stood empty for many years. A photograph of 1913 shows George Dyson as occupant, he is listed in directories as a grocer and draper c1904-1908. It was later taken over by Leonard Baylis, his wife and her sister, Miss King who stocked women's apparel, more up-to-date than at Harris or Swans. The Post Office transferred here from Swan's in 1920. They were succeeded by Geoffrey & Dorothy Clark who during WWII made the shop into a general stores. A large room at the back became the Headquarters of the village St John Ambulance Brigade. Jeffrey & Marie Carter took the business in 1962 and were succeeded by their son, Chris, the present owner [SN175 FOM p15].

Cross

Beth Davis writes:

In the early 15th century a cross was set up in the churchyard possibly as a preaching cross for the visiting friars, it was moved to the 'square' opposite the church to commemorate the place where Bishop Morton is said to have first seen the splendours of Ely cathedral in 1478. The cross is carved from Barnack limestone and has been altered; it originally had four tiers of circular steps to the base which are clearly shown in Wm Cole's sketch of 1748 (Cole 1748). One step is shown in the print of the cross and the church in 1837; the steps have been removed but the present brick base may have been built during the alterations and repairs which were also carried out to the churchyard wall and the market place in the late 19th century. The octagonal shaft of the cross rests

on an octagonal base decorated with panels of quatrefoils, it has a square head with a niche on each face for a statue. The cross once had a weather vane that was moved to the school in the restoration by Rattee & Kett of 1909. In an 1837 drawing the cross is shown with a decorated finial which would have been the original (VCH p.152, Ely Rural Deanery Magazine).

The square and part of the High Street as seen today would have been part of a larger green with farmhouses and cottages facing onto it and onto the two main streets from the river. The buildings in the 15th century would have been built from local materials with the best buildings constructed from good quality timber. The Chequers may have originally been one of these timber-framed buildings before it was rebuilt in the early 18th century, with the Guildhall on the site of the Red Lion Inn. These buildings could have been some of the first permanent timber-framed buildings in Stretham, and would have been altered and replaced in the following centuries before their final demolition. The fairs and markets were important to the life of the village and in this area there may have always been shops, a smithy and carpenter's shop, a cobblers and harness maker, or a butcher. The fires of the 19th century, removed much of historical interest from this area but the replacement buildings obviously give the square the character it has today.

(Dowsing for the original green 1999 showed that it included an area between High Street and Chapel Lane)

The town house, the original Guildhall, would have faced the square and have been similar to other buildings of its type built in good quality oak timber-frame with a long jetty on the main façade facing the cross. The references to it describes it as being divided into three tenements in 1573, and also in the Deeds of 1586 when the property is transferred to 'Dr Ridlie, parson of Stretham '--- 'to be given 'to such pore people as shall bee thought in need....'. The timber-frame would have been divided into three bays of equal length, and in the upper floor there would have been large windows overlooking the market place. It is uncertain when the poorhouse was sold from the charity; it may possibly have been converted to an inn at that time.

Town houses were buildings usually converted by the parish from the guildhall. Many guildhalls were built in the late 15th and early 16th centuries possibly when the guilds were unable to use the church at the time of the Reformation when pews and the pulpit filled the nave. There are several examples in Cambridgeshire (RCHM West Cambs, Bainbridge 1996). The guildhalls were used by the guild members for meetings and celebrations and for burial wakes, because of their wealth they were dissolved by Henry VIII in 1547 (Bainbridge p.147). After their dissolution many guildhalls were bought by the parish for use as a poor house and some were converted to single domestic use; at Stretham the building was converted into three poor houses.

The guild hall in Stretham would have been built by one of the guilds or shared by the three guilds that had their chapels in the parish church. Dowsing showed the position of guildhall behind and in line with the Red Lion Inn and in front of the site of the tithe barn.

No.47 : Red Lion

Advertised for sale in 1839 when it was reported to have been “in trade for 100 years” It was damaged by fire in September 1850 and tenements in the Red Lion Yard were also burnt in September 1861 [SB75]. By 1906 it belonged to the brewery of A & B. Hall, Ely and was kept by Philip Easy who had been there 12 years. It had two rooms used by the licensee's family and four more bedrooms available for lodgers or travellers together with stabling for 14 horses & eight vehicles. In the 1920s there was a billiards room in the part of the building running down Chapel Street. Dr White from Haddenham used the pub for his doctor's surgery Other landlords included Albert Blayney who retired in 1967 & was succeeded by Ted Langford until he retired in 1988. After a period of uncertainty about its future in 1992 David Jenkins bought

the pub and undertook extensive renovations including a conservatory, introducing an extensive menu of food that is continued under the present landlord. [FOM]

Bus shelters

The bus shelter beside the pub was erected in 1968 in memory of the Hazel family; the shelter beside the rectory wall was erected in 1968 with money originally collected for a Memorial Hall [SN133].

Telephone kiosk.

Telephones were first installed in the village in 1938 [SN138].

Old School

Rev Hugh Pigot initiated plans for the erection of a new school. With the aid of local subscriptions, a grant from the Diocesan Board, contributions from the village charities and nearly £400 from Pigot himself the new schools were opened in November 1872 on the site of the old tithe barn, which had been incorporated into the school. The buildings, one for the boys, another for the girls alongside, were designed by a well-known architect J. P. St Aubyn. When on 19th May 1872 the children, with the rector at the head marched into the new school the youngsters at first appeared bewildered, having so much room after being cramped in the old school. It was soon too small and an infants' school was built further down the High Street. Originally it had a bell tower on which the weathervane removed from the cross was erected in 1918. The Bell tower was removed about 1967. The school closed following the erection of the present building in Wood Lane, which officially opened in 1978. The old building was offered for sale, in July 1979 for light industrial use or as a community centre at a price of £27,500 having previously been offered at £10,000. It was converted in 1980 into the Spaceward recording studios, attracting various top-name musicians until 1987 when it closed and became part of Spaceward Microsystems Video Graphics. It was purchased by Sadie – Studio Audio & Video Ltd – in 1991 by which time the building had become neglected. They have invested money in restoring and extending the building, winning a top Cambridgeshire conservation award [SN150].

No.51

Former school headteacher's house, sold in 1978 for £14,300 [SN150]. It was used as offices in connection with the businesses at the school and is in process of renovation and extension in Spring 2000.

No.55

Formerly a shop occupied by H.W. Harris selling sweets, boots, shoes, shirts & underwear – he supplied complete men's outfits. On Sundays Mr Harris and his father went to church wearing frock coats and shiny black top hats. Undated sale particulars (about mid 1950s) describe it as the "Central Stores established over 50 years", it had a tobacco licence and takings were approximating to £60 a week; it was priced at £1,750. For a while it was a Newman's grocers shop, & later a Betting shop. It was for sale in July 1985 - £44,950 [SN 150,174 FOM p10]

Pump

The village pump stood at the entrance to Pump Lane. This was the main source of public water and was demolished after December 1948. It was here that the village proposed erecting the War Memorial after the Great War, but could not get permission.

Benzley Wright recalled that there used to be a green here on which roundabouts and dancing bears stood at Feast time, while stalls stretched down the street towards the Sun corner. The stalls were moved to the recreation ground in 1928 [SN17.14, 133, BW].

West side

No.26

Built on the site of a large house belonging to the Bents, a farming family. It was one of the last working farm yards until the retirement of Godfrey Parish and still retains former outbuildings.

No.28

Formerly home to Tommy Hale who in 1978 discovered a roll of undeveloped film he had taken in 1925 on his Brownie box camera. The film produced good prints of village life 50 years before. The buildings were subsequently renovated and extended.

No.30

Listed Grade 2 17th century cottage incorporating a much older beam. Inclosure plot number 128, described as a house and homestead occupied by Levi Langford. A room at the north side of the property was formerly a hairdressers shop. The barber was reported to have lathered one man ready for a shave, but then gone around to the Chequers for a game of dominoes, forgetting his customer. [BW SN16 17.18 FOM p75]

No.32

Former barn has brick inscriptions 1795, J. Dring and initials W.L., probably commemorating the Langford family. Inside written in chalk on some board was the inscription "Aug 1st 1851 W. Read, waggon painted here". Converted to house & offered for sale in May 1995. [SN150]

No.38

Formerly the **Chequers** public house (see Beth Davis notes page 13). Bequeathed to Stretham charity by Richard Rysley 1553; it was leased by Charity to Bailey & Tebbutt by 1906, when the licensee was Reuben Jacobs. It had two bedrooms for lodgers or travellers and stabling for four horses and three vehicles. It was sold to Greene King in 1929 for £900. The property also housed a butcher's shop once kept by Reuben Jacobs, After his death the shop remained empty until Herbert Nightingale took it, he was famous for his sausages. [BW SN17.18]

Other publicans included Tommy Hales' parents from 1923-32, Albert Pope, & Mr Bond. In 1961 it was taken by Alf Hemmings and continued by his widow Dulcie until 1988 after which the pub closed.[SN175]. It was sold in 1990 and converted to a private house. Two houses were built in the ground behind [SN150]

Church

see separate detailed notes by Beth Davis

Churchyard

The churchyard formerly projected further towards the cross, it was set back in 1926 and again in 1928 when the road was straightened to remove a bend that had caused difficulty for increasing motor traffic. The work involved disturbing a number of bones which were reburied at the back of the church. The churchyard is much higher than the road level, there having been many thousand people buried there over the centuries, comparatively few of whom are commemorated by gravestones. The churchyard was closed to burials with the opening of the parish cemetery in 1886. It is now maintained by East Cambridgeshire District Council.

The **War memorial** was unveiled in July 1922 following controversy about its siting – see separate notes. Another prominent memorial to members of the Wesley family was unveiled in 1934 [SN143].

No.40 : Rectory

Former Rectory, until 1988, after which it remained empty while various proposals were debated:. It is now Juniper House, a home for autistic adults. In 1979 the former stable block was converted into

a place of worship [PCC]; a chapel was also dedicated in the barn in June 1982 [SN175]. See separate notes by Beth Davis.

Excavations in the rectory gardens revealed the foundations of an ancient structure: see notes on archaeology [SB56]

Rectory Barn

Timbered barn & stables, probably built by Rev Baber, 1851. It was used as an ecumenical centre & the barn chapel dedicated in 1992.

HIGH STREET SOUTH (nos.57-75, 44-50)

East side

No.57

Formerly the house of the family running the Central Garage - for details see Pump Lane nos.2-8. The house and garage was advertised for sale in October 1982 for £55,000.

No.59

Formerly site of two thatched, clunch built cottages, one contained three rooms, the other was unoccupied at a sale in 1926 when they sold for £60 [SN150]. Jack Edwards had built an electrician's shop on the site by the 1960s, retailing and repairing televisions, radios etc. This was in turn demolished for the existing building in 1976. After his death it became a television rental shop. It was for sale in January 1983 for £37,500 and subsequently used as a grocery shop before being converted to a private house [SN174].

No.61

Formerly Oliver Thurmott's saddler & harness maker's shop supplying everything for horses [FOM p80]. It remained empty for some years until opened by John Lee as a butcher's shop in November 1967. It has continued to trade under various butchers, the current being Paul Smith

No.63

Formerly a farm house. It was sold by auction September 1926 as a farm house with outbuildings, farm premises & saddlers shop, occupied by the late Mrs Parish & Mr B. Parish. Outbuildings included dairy, chicken house, cart shed, cow houses and thatched barns. [SN150]

No.65-71

Houses built on the former farmyard. One farmer, Bert Parish, always had stack of hay or clover for feeding 20 cows & milked his cows in sheds on the site. He won a prize for the cleanest dairy at the County Agricultural Show in the June 1930. In July 1921 his stacks caught fire 'drying several neighbouring walls'. It was advertised as 'an excellent building site in 1926' but not actually developed until 1981 when four houses built by Jonathan Boyd were advertised at prices from £25,500 [SN 65,150,174 FOM p70]

No.73 : Playgroup and Youth Club

Former **Infants' School** built, 1894-5. On its closure as a school in 1977 it became the home for the village playgroup & youth club. This had been revived in April 1970 and by November 1971 was flourishing under a management committee that included Alan Ingle, Leslie Rutherford, Debby Manning, Rina Wagner, Linda Sadler & David Stearn. The white building, which was used as a dining hall for both schools, is now the HQ of the Royal British Legion. It was built following a fire in 1944 that destroyed an old barn formerly on the site.

No.75

Formerly a small grocers shop with a stone-flagged floor run by Widow Wright; she also sold bread & wet fish which used to be displayed in the window with her cat laying beside them. It was later run by Mrs Burnham. Benzley Wright recalls that it used to have mangle in a place around the back [FOM p8; BW SN16].

South of no.75

Site of a row of cottages that included Percy Beasley's hairdressers shop in 1914-15. Jack Sadler dried mole and rabbit skins in a shed at the back [FOM p91].

Jubilee Garden

Site of the Town Pond, some 3-4 feet deep, through which horses would be driven to clean their hooves & where carts were washed. From time to time it would overflow and flood the adjacent houses. The pond was filled in after 1935. It was subsequently used as a play ground for the Infants' school, and the site for a mobile classroom. It was bought by the Parish Council in 1977 for £50 and opened as the Jubilee Garden in September 1980 [FOM p74]. The village sign was unveiled on Feast Day 2000

West side

Parish Room

Opened in 1886, it was intended to be used for mother's meetings, classes for religious instruction and in winter months as a free reading room. It has since been used for a variety of activities, including a social club in 1901 and a youth club, together with a range of whist, beetle and domino drives. The hall was enlarged and reopened in 1961 making it large enough for the village bowls club dinner-dances and other functions [PCC].

No.44

Grade 2 listed cottage. The extension nearest the road was formerly a shop occupying a space no bigger than most living rooms. The shop used to extend further forward until road widening in 1928. It was occupied by a number of owners. They included Parnell's grocer's cum drapers cum butcher who killed his own animals in the back yard & Joe Garner the butcher, who moved his business opposite the Chequers. Bob Lock married Violet Garner and ran a general grocery stores later continued by Mr Cox & Mr Short. It was subsequently home to Cyril Parish. The house itself was a wing of no.46 – see below [BW SN16 FOM p9].

No.46 : **White Lion**

Part of the estate of Sir Charles Gould Morgan in 1782 it was sold to Thomas Legge 1808, by which time it may have been a pub. In 1906 the White Lion public house was owned by Thomas Legge, brewer of Ely and John Sindall had been licensee for 10 years. He was also a butcher and ran a coal yard and these trades continued under succeeding occupants. It passed to Cutlack & Harlock in 1929 for £4,500. The taproom was on the left with wooden benches fixed around the walls. Cyril Parish was the last person to use the site for farming. The house was restored by Gareth & Jean Adamson in 1981 [FOM p20,31 SN150, 174]. See architectural notes by Beth Davis

St James Close

Described as "six exceptionally attractive and high quality new architect designed houses" in sale particulars of October 1979 they were built by Jonathan Boyd on the site of former pigsties [SN150].

No.48

Formerly Gotobed's pork butchers, which was remembered as being of the highest quality & especially noted for their wonderful sausages. They used to have a horse & cart taking meat around the adjacent area [BW SN17.41 FOM p19].

KING COB

King Cob, The Grove, Andrew's Close

Private housing estate first proposed in 1973 but the scheme attracted opposition & was finally approved in 1976. The first property was advertised for sale, February 1980 [SN174]. King Cob was named after a field further along Green End where an old house formerly stood, The Grove commemorates Wesley's Grove works and Andrew's Close is named after the builder's son.

KITSON GARDENS

Estate developed by Reason Homes on site of former haulage yard, see details under Wood Lane. Houses on the estate were offered for sale in May 1995 at £59,950 [FOM p82]. It was named after Miss Kitson, a former village infants school teacher & her sister on whose garden part of it was built

MEADOWCROFT

Formerly a field in which the Methodist Sunday School treats were held. It was the Parish Council's preferred site for council housing in the early 1950s instead of Berry Green. Planning permission for a private housing estate was granted in February 1969 & it was developed in 1971 with prices from £5,425 for a detached house; £3,995 for a semi-detached bungalow, though by 1981 this had risen to £21,850 [SN150] [FOM p145]

MIDDLE CLOSE see Chapel Street

NEWMARKET ROAD

Previous names: Low Road 1891, Pond Street, the Gravel; a proposal in 1901 to rename it "Victoria Road" was defeated [SN133]. It became known as Military Road after 1916, & was renamed Newmarket Road in 1950 [SN133]

North side

Jubilee Garden

See notes on the High Street. A drain runs behind houses east to a tunnel under the road and around the allotments. [BW SN19]

No.3

Formerly a pair of brick & slated cottages which were for sale in 1926 under will of T.G. Parish

No.9

William Bradshaw, a baker, bought a cottage and yard from John Jacobs in 1877. Benzley Wright remembered Percy Bradshaw's baker's shop with long bakehouse at the back. People used to take their bread to be baked once a week. It was cooked in the bottom of the oven & they walked home with an old pushchair or pram containing ½ dozen loaves, each with a lovely crust. Bradshaw's would also charge a penny to cook people's Sunday dinner, as the domestic oven was not big enough to take a normal 9-10 lb joint. People took cloths because it was hot to carry home & to keep off the dust from the road. They also sold pig food. After Wesley's engineering works closed Tom Collins took the premises and did repairs. Ernie Collins joined him & built up a successful crankshaft grinding business, employing a number of skilled men on a variety of work. He also charged radio accumulators. [BW SN16 FOM p22 SB67]

No.13

Advertised for sale in June 1981 at £16,500 [SN150]

No.15

Formerly the **Malt & Hops** pub. In 1906 it was owned by Thomas Legge of Ely and had stabling for one horse and one vehicle. The report commented: "The rooms in the house are very low and must be very unhealthy. Urinal required. It had been run for one year by Isaac Nichols. Other landlords included Tom Stubbins [FOM p27].

East of no.15 stood an old barn, formerly thatched. It was subsequently demolished for the houses in Hay Fen Close.

No.17

Site of the house & business of Arthur Johnson, carpenter, painter & decorator [FOM p56]

No.19

Farmhouse built following the inclosure of the village in the 1830s. The plot was occupied by Alice Sennitt and described as a house and homestead with an orchard. A track formerly led north, through the present Meadowcroft site to link up with the footpath leading to the cemetery.

No.21

Formerly two cottages. Described in undated sale particulars of the 1970s as a "superb residence" & priced at £4,750 [SN150].

Former **Gravel pit** in which the Stretosaurus was discovered in 1952 (see separate notes by Sarah Wroot). Subsequently used as landfill site & blamed for a plague of crickets in 1967. It was fully filled in by January 1980 [SB5 SN174].

South side

No.2

The garden alongside Cage Lane was the site of the **Mission Hall**, opened January 1884 for the London Evangelistic Mission. The corrugated iron building was designed by a London architect & included a coffee room and lavatory. The interior walls were lined with wood and covered with texts. On the opening evening 600 people crowded into the main room. It regularly ministered to a congregation of between 100-200 people who sang Sankey hymns accompanied by an organ. It was subsequently sold and re-erected on the corner of Brays Lane Ely for the use of the St John Ambulance Brigade [SN132]

Old baker's shop

Formerly a village grocery shop kept by Emily Agnes Wright until 1916 when it packed up because of rationing. It was let for a baker's shop from which Horace Taylor delivered bread until 1972 [BW SN16 FOM p1].

No.4

Site of large whitewashed thatched house formerly home to Benzley Wright. It had two big bedrooms & an old garret where they could put 20 beds. The family took in lodgers from all around the world: couples from the stage, conjurers, fortunetellers; solicitors, auctioneers, steeple jacks & dozens of Wesley's men. During Lancashire Wakes Week they would have six at a time. Benzley recalled that there was no light upstairs, only candles & a little glimmer through the southern end. It was naked thatch in places & the mortar had fallen off but it was a very warm house, cool in summer. Out the back there was a big old dairy down steps & a well 22 ft deep which was covered with wood & zinc [BW SN19]

No.6 : Fish & Chip shop

Formerly a house and open shed where Mr Holden had an old handcart selling wet fish. Later home to Mrs Gautrey whose brother, F.W. Savidge, was a missionary. When he retired they had a sun lounge built at the back for him with windows looking out to the garden & from there he wrote his memories. He died in 1935. When they left Mr Edwin Dyos opened a transport cafe & sold fish & chips. It was sold in August 1979. Subsequently the old buildings were demolished and the present shop and house built by Tony Hall [BW SN17.15,64,70,142, 174]

No.8 : Grove House

Formerly home to John Wesley, proprietor of the traction engine works – see notes on Green End. During, the time he was there the evangelist Gypsy Smith came & had a service on the lawn. The initials WB visible on the end of the house probably commemorate William Blinch. [BW SN17.19]

Allotments

a river or drain once led alongside the eastern side of the ground, down to the river, where a windmill pumped the water up into the Old West. It may have continued around and back along Green End. A map of 1834 marks the old lode and a proposed new drain. It also marks the level of a flood in 1795 which seems to have swamped much of the current allotment area [CRO P147/3/1-4]. There may have been a dock or unloading area where boats unloaded their cargo which was brought in to store at warehouses in the Read's Street, Chapel Street area.

The allotments were awarded to the Charity Trustees at the time of inclosure in and would have gone some way to alleviate the impact of the loss of the open fields. Strict conditions were attached to the holding of allotments. The land was to be cultivated solely by spade husbandry and to be cropped with corn, vegetables or fruit. Not more than half a rood was to be planted with potatoes no two white straw crops to be taken in succession. Two cartloads of manure were to be carried on annually and laid on the land where it shall be most wanted. No work was to be done by the tenant on his allotment after 6 o'clock in the morning or before 6 in the evening while he was in the employment at daily or weekly wages, without the consent of his employer. Perhaps the importance of the allotments may be gleaned by the following clause: "any persons convicted of theft, of deserting his wife and family or of any other offences against the laws of the country to be immediately deprived of his allotment without remuneration for labour or planting or for the value of the crop thereon". The allotments are still controlled by the Charily Trustees, though the rules are no longer strictly enforced!

Military Road

The road to Wicken was a gravel road until 1914 when the army constructed it as a Military Road to allow transport of men and materials towards the East Coast. However there was a dispute over who should pay for the erection of the bridges over the Old West & Cam which were crossed by pontoon bridges. So these were not built until 1928. The bridge over the Old West was reconstructed and that at Dimock's Cote strengthened in 1994. The road was flooded for several months in 1919 due to a burst bank and again in March 1947.

Gravel Farm

In 1865 it was sold under the will of William Edwards Read; it was occupied by Henry Mitchell & John Sutton [SN149]. It was brought by Guy Shropshire in 1968.

Tile House Farm

Occupants have included King Charles who in 1851 had a wife & 9 children & Charles Hazel, 1881. The farm continued in the Hazel family for many years. It was modernised and sold in 1985. There is an important Roman site in the fields adjacent (see archaeology notes) [SN142]

Railway crossing

The railway line was laid in 1845.

Fish & Duck pub

Described in a sale document of Nash's brewery in August 1852 as a new-built brick, timber & slate house with seven rooms & stabling for 12 horses. It had been built on land purchased in 1819 from Mr Robert Scott who had entered into a bond not to permit any wine, beer etc to be sold in any house or building thereafter erected on the adjoining land retained by him. A new road down to the pub was constructed in 1968 & it was modernised and extended with a Marina suite opening in 1972 [SN150].

Dimmock's Cote Farm

In 1865 it was sold under the will of William Edwards Read. Bought with Gravel Farm by Guy Shropshire for a record price in 1968 [SN142,149]

PLANTATION GATE

A Grade 2 listed building the front has a brick inscribed WRE MR 1770 – possibly William Edward Read. Was plot no.29 on Inclosure Award allotted to Thomas Waddelow Granger. The attached shop to the East is used as a hairdressers shop by Jean Phillips. See architectural notes by Beth Davis.

Roadway leads to Manor or **Plantation Farm**, the main Manor house – see separate notes on Lords of the Manor. They seem largely to have been absentee landlords most not living in the house itself. The old Manor House was demolished in July 1981 and two new houses built adjacent to the site.

PUMP LANE

Name : Pump Lane 1851, 1891

Site of the main village pump – see notes on High Street Central

No.1

Rutland House. A Grade 2 listed building dating to the late 18th or early 19th century. It is the sole remaining property in the village with a thatched roof. Plot 112 on the Inclosure Award it was described as a house and homestead belonging to Ely Feofees. It was advertised for sale in January 1981 for £36,750 [SN174]

No.1a:

“Tressillian”, detached house, advertised for sale in August 1985 for £56,000 [SN174]

Nos.2-8

Built on the site of a blacksmith's shop kept by George Ellwood, whose son Harold turned it into the Central Garage & petrol station. This was run for 25 years by Gerald Stubbins until his retirement. It was for sale in October 1982. Plans were agreed in August 1984 and one-bedroomed starter homes at £25,000, & two ranch style bungalows at £30,000 were on sale next year [SN174 FOM p49]

No. 18 : **Brooke House**

A Victorian residence dated 1843 it was advertised for sale in September 1981 for £55,000. It was home in 1851 to Thomas Parish, a farmer & dealer in cattle. In 1922 Mrs Lister moved there on her retirement from farming at Grange Farm. By 1935 it was occupied by Harold Walker, gentleman [FOM p67]

READ'S STREET

Previous names: Back Street 1841, 1851; East Street – 1891 census; Read's Lane
Probably named after the Read family

East side

No.1

Former occupants have included Thomas Jacobs, a large cattle dealer; in 1911 fire raged through his outbuildings and cattle chained in the barns were roasted to death [SN142]. It was advertised for sale in May 1984 at £59,950 [SN174]

Nos.3-11

Former council houses built between the wars on the site of Perry Sennitt's farmyard; the farmyard was bounded by a high wall which ran up Read's Street – see notes on Brook Lane

No.15

Formerly home of Geoff Beasley, the village milk roundsman for 42 years until he and his wife retired in November 1971. They made their deliveries with a 50-year-old milk cart which was drawn by a horse, their final horse, Jenny, a 13-year-old black pony also retired [ES 11.11.1971, FOM p69]

No.15a

Formerly site of Mr Beasley's stables and barns.

No.17 :

Formerly site of two thatched dwellings that caught fire when Mr Ruane had a bonfire; he built them a new cottage, which still stands.

No.19

Erected 1980; it was advertised for sale in July 1984 for £57,500 [SN174]

No.21

Inclosure plot 92 described as a tenement & garden, occupied by Thomas Waddelow Granger. In 1867 four tenements were sold under the will of Frederick Granger (SN149). Was the home of William Lythell, the village policeman. He was called up as a War reserve policeman and stayed on until his retirement. He served as a parish councillor and member of the Feast Parade committee, continuing to lead the procession as he had when in uniform. He was the Parish Council's choice to plant the Jubilee oak on the Recreation Ground. He died in January 1993.

No.27 : **Rose Cottage**

A clay lump cottage – see architectural notes by Beth Davis

West side

Nos.2-8

This side of the street was devastated in the fire of May 1st 1844. It was subsequently redeveloped with a large barn, latterly used by Routledge and Goad's corn merchants on the corner with Top Street and a row of terraced houses down Read's Street. These were built in two phases & were demolished in 1974 having stood largely derelict for some years. The corn merchant's business

transferred to Ely Road and the site redeveloped for the present houses in 1984 – see notes on Top Street

No.10

Near the wall to Orchard House stood a separate cottage, formerly thatched, the home of Joseph Stubbins, for a while there was a cobbler's workshop attached. [BW SN19 FOM p79]

No.12

On the Inclosure Award this is plot 88, a house and garden owned by Sarah and Ann Read. The building is distinctive for its height and that most of the front of the house was only one-brick width, with speculation that it may have been a large opening, possibly for a barn. [SN29]

No.14

Inclosure plot 87: a house and garden occupied by Alice Brown. Despite its present name this was not a pub.

No.16

Formerly home to a blacksmith, Mr Driver, the grounds included a wide range of outbuildings [FOM p68].

No.18

Formerly the **Crown** public house, mentioned in a sale particular of 1803 [CH]. In 1906 it was owned by A. & B. Hall of Ely and kept by Edward Reeve. The pub closed in 1933 [SN132] and became the private home of members of the Reeve family. It was for sale in November 1981 at a price of £45,000

No.20 (site)

Inclosure plot 85: house and homestead allotted to Ely Feofees. Subsequently the yard beside Chapel Lane became Harry Stanley's carpenters and undertakers works from about 1924. Afterwards it was taken by Alfred Routledge, carpenters and undertakers business & later used as an antique centre. The site received planning permission for residential development in 1969 and the workshop and the premises including a weather-boarded & iron roofed barn, and an open coach house were sold by auction. It was developed as starter homes after 1986 [BW SN16.14, SN150, FOM p55]

No.22

Formerly the site of a large stone-built thatched cottage. This end of the street had a number of such historic buildings which fell into decay; "such old buildings are better demolished" said the Parish Council in 1954, and they were. [SN94, 133]

Hay Fen Close

Private housing estate taking its name from the old field name

No.24

Built by former village electrician Jack Edwards on the site of another old house.

ST JAMES' CLOSE

see High Street South

SHORT ROAD

Previous names: Cambridge Road 1851, Old Cambridge Road, Short Lane, 1841, 1851, 1891.

It was renamed Short Road in 1950 [SN133].

This was the main road to Cambridge from the construction of the A10 in the 1760s until the road was diverted to run between the Cambridge Road council houses in 1928

No.2 : "Springfield"

Built 1955 [SN142].

No.3a : The Elms

Occupants have included King Charles in 1887 & John Henry Savidge, the baker in the 1930s. A dental practice was conducted from the house and a separate dental surgery built in 1976. It was subsequently used by a company selling books by mail. It was advertised for sale as an 'important detached residence of outstanding character', in June 1981, priced at £62,000. [FOM p21 SN149]

No.14

Advertised for sale in September 1983, described as "a 2-bedroomed detached bungalow, situated in one of the best positions in the village, Short Road is quiet and a good residential locality". It was priced at £25,500. It has subsequently been extensively expanded.

Fieldside entrance

Formerly the site of a small ranch-type house built by Nurse Nation on an area of ground, where Miss Young established a poultry farm. It was demolished for Fieldside.

No.20

Formerly home of Nurse Hilda Cook, the village district nurse for 27 years [FOM p95]

No.25/27

New house opposite bowls club advertised for sale, August 1981 for £33,950

No.28

Described as newly built in a sale particular of June 1981, when it was priced at £35,850 [SN150].

STARLOCK CLOSE

Named after one of the old parish fields

Private housing estate; sale of bungalow, July 1979 - £34,950 [SN174]

TOP STREET

Previous names: Bell Street 1846; known as High Street until about 1891, when it was described in the Census returns as 'commonly called Top Street'

The street was largely destroyed in May 1844 by what the Cambridge Chronicle described as "one of the most awful fires which it was ever our province to record". It destroyed all the property on the south side of the street. See notes elsewhere

North side

No.1 : **Oakley House**

Oakley House was not affected by the fire. It has a plaque with the initials EGS & the date 1758.

The initials probably relate to the Granger family who were resident there in 1836. See architectural notes by Beth Davis

No.3

Formerly the premises of George Richardson, a paper-hanger & decorator who, Benzley Wright recalled, always walked about with a white apron on. If he came to decorate your house you needn't move anything; he would give you a 1/- for every spot of paint you could find when he'd done. He was also a most marvellous signwriter who would do shop signs, farm carts etc, plain or fancy work. He was very particular & took pride in his work. There was a single storey building now taken down to make a roadway. [BW SN17.42 FOM p57]

No.9

Formerly named Belle Vue – as it was opposite the Bell pub. Originally it was two cottages, which were sold by auction in March 1968 by the executors of G.W. Dimock [SN150]

Hazel Court

Hazel Court sheltered accommodation opened in April 1976, though tenants had started arriving in December 1975. The site was formerly a rickyard belonging to Parsons Charity, Ely. Benzley Wright recalled a story that an old man couldn't get lodgings in Stretham & had to go to Ely where he died so he left the property to the Ely charity. On the corner of Wood Lane stood a large house once owned by Bultitaft, the miller. Its walls were a mixture of white and old red bricks that clearly outlined the shape of an earlier thatched property, probably destroyed in the 1844 fire. [SN19 SN142]

An old well which used to stand on the green was reopened in June 1901 having been closed some 50 years earlier. It was 24 feet deep with a plentiful supply of water. A pump was erected and it continued until it was dismantled in 1934 [SN133 FOM p117].

South side

No.6

Has a plaque reading “Huckle Cottage 1914”. It was advertised for sale in April 1982 for £29,750 [SN174].

No.8-14 : Dr Rysley's Feofees

Cottages owned and administered by the Stretham Charity. They were rebuilt by Edward Wooton after the 1844 fire at a cost of £301.10.0. The site was then known as Lincoln's Gardens. [SN132 SB33]. See notes on Charities

No.16

Formerly the **Bell** public house with stables & facilities for lodgers. It was sold by Parson's Charity in 1837 [CH]. By 1906 it was a Morgan's pub run by Walter Porter. It became a private house in 1934 when the pub closed. [FOM p29 SN94]

No.18 : Hylton House

In 1765 the property on this site was described as a Manor, Manor House and messuage called Solliams or Wimple. In May 1844 the dwelling house, new barn, granary, stables, machines, wagons, out-buildings, wheat stack, straw stack, 12 pigs & fowls belonging to Samuel Coy were destroyed. By 1851 the house was described as 'newly erected' when it was sold & the existing building includes the date 1844 on a plaque. Amongst subsequent occupants was Harry Lowe, a poultry farmer who kept his hens in fields off Wilburton Road. A fund of local knowledge, he was a keen sportsman and a founder member of the Stretham bowls club.

Nos.28-38

Built on the site of Routledge and Goad's corn merchants' barns and the adjacent farmyard. Varying bricks in the wall along Top Street used to show the outline of buildings destroyed in the fire of May 1844. Routledge and Goad moved to Ely Road after the construction of Hazel Court whose

residents found the noise unsettling. The site was for sale for £100,000 in August 1983. Houses were built by Barry Elsdon and priced from £28,750 in July 1984 [SN150].

WALNUT TREE CLOSE

see High Street North

WILBURTON ROAD

Pervious names: Long Lane, Cambridge Road
SP149-AP10 255-AP10 650

North side

No.1

Formerly the **Sun** public house. In August 1852 Nash's brewery sold the Sun Beer House, tenant Jesse Watts, describing it as a new-built brick and slate house, with a tailor's shop, stable and outbuildings. There were also two cottages, gardens etc forming a good building frontage next to the High Road. It made £214. In 1906 it was owned by A. & B. Hall of Ely & the licensee for the previous 47 years had been Edward Langford. It had stabling for four horses and one vehicle. [SN150, FOM p31]

No.7

The site is featured in the 1836 Inclosure Award as plot no.142, a house and homestead occupied by William Hazel. The present house was erected after inclosure. It continued to be owned by the Hazel family until the 1970s. Having fallen into disrepair it was renovated in 1993.

Beyond it stood a pump so high a platform was built around it, where farmers' water carts were filled [FOM p117].

No.8 : Cambridge House

The site is marked as plot no.143 in the Inclosure Award, a public house, homestead & orchard occupied by James Watts.

No.8b

Saxon Court, described in June 1981 as an exceptional detached residence and priced at £72,000 it was built by Tony Walton on land formerly used for Harry Lowe's poultry sheds. It was named after archaeological remains were found during its construction. [SN150]

No.9a

Described in sale particulars in June 1981 as a detached residence, greatly improved, at a price of £38,500 [SN150].

A photograph of a group of houses leading up to the roundabout were featured by Ian Nairn in his book "Your England Revisited", published in 1964. He commented on their juxtaposition: "Here two cottages set up the main theme, one at ninety degrees is the counterpoint, and the garden shed forms a half-size echo. This is all accidental and instinctive ... our job now is to do this deliberately and consciously". The cottages he features, standing low down beneath the height of the road, have now largely been rebuilt.

The area was transformed with the building of the bypass in 1964. This combined with the piping of the ditch contributed to extensive flooding to the west of the bypass between 1977 & 1983

South side

Tollhouse

At Inclosure the turnpike tollhouse was occupied by Ann Pitchford and the family continued to occupy the property after the turnpike houses and gates were sold on 29th October 1874.

The property was made into two cottages, occupied amongst others by members of the Fletcher family. Benzley Wright recalled that baking was done in an oven, a part of the fireplace which had a piece of zinc over it. The oak beam over the Inglenook was wallpapered & used to catch fire, Mrs Fletcher would throw a bucket of water over it to put it out and later repaper again. She used to heat bricks in the oven which the children took to bed with them. All eight children slept in one large bedroom with a red curtain to separate the six boys from the two girls. The parents slept in the back bedroom. They took an umbrella to bed in case it rained in the night. The cottage was rented; the rent was probably £2 or £3 a year and the family reared a pig to pay for this each Michaelmas; they kept another to pay for their clothes and kept an allotment to grow vegetables. The Fletchers lived there till 1919 when they moved to Stretham Ferry. The house was subsequently occupied by Jack Asplin a boot mender and shoe maker who converted part into a shoemakers shop. The right-hand cottage was occupied at that time by Sid Canham and his mother. She married a man named Cameron and walked to church down the middle of the road through all the dust, wearing her long dress. The Canhams used to keep a billy-goat which could be smelled for miles around and once chased Mr Fletcher up the street. They also had a well in the garden. She died in 1923 and Sid moved to Read's Street. The tollhouse was for sale in January 1983 for £29,500 [BW SN19, 150 FOM p78]

Haulage depot

The commercial site next to the roundabout was owned in the 1960s by Healey Wilson & sons and used as a lorry and vehicle depot. It was sold by auction in May 1970 [SN150].

Recreation ground

The ground was first rented as a recreation field in 1879 instead of the previous Recreation Ground in Grunty Fen, which was too distant. The Parish Council bought it from Sir Frederick Hiam in 1926-27 for £500. The feast amusements have been held on the field since 1928.

The first **play equipment**, including a plank swing, was bought with money left over from the celebrations for the Jubilee of King George V and opened in July 1935. It has subsequently been replaced and updated by the Parish Council. Trees around the perimeter were planted in commemoration of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953

A **sports day** was held on the Rectory lawn in 1926. It included a Marathon road race from Stretham to Lt Thetford and back. This proved so popular that the next year it transferred to the Recreation Ground, the Marathon being run as twelve laps of the field. Cycle races started and part of the ground was levelled for a cycle track. The sports developed into a major event attracting professional competitors for money prizes. The sports day included a flower show held in the Black Hut with prizes for vegetables, fruit and flowers [FOM].

A **bowls** club was granted an area for a green in 1935. A pavilion was erected and the club opened in 1937. Both men and women were admitted and in 1948 Mrs Dorothy Clark, Irene Lowe, Minnie Lowe and Emily Gibbons won the County Fours and played at Wimbledon. The following year three of them were placed in the National Triples finals, losing by a single shot. As the club has flourished an extension incorporating a kitchen/bar was opened in 1974 by Marion and Archie Hazel. A growing membership showed the need for even bigger premises and in the winter of 1985-86 the pavilion was demolished and a new clubhouse built. It was officially opened by Clement Freud, MP, in June 1986. [SB9]

A **cricket** pitch was laid out when the land was first bought. A **football** club was started about 1909-10 by Mr Dyson & named Stretham Hotspurs after Tottenham Hotspurs, because he came from London [BW SN16.5]. Meetings were held between the football and cricket clubs in 1931 to agree the starting dates of their respective seasons. Cricket was to run from 1st April to 31st August,

though uncompleted football matches could be played until the 2nd Saturday in April. The field was grazed by Mr Parish's cows which provided an additional hazard for players to watch out for. A major refurbishment of the field, with ploughing, levelling and reseeded, took place in 1939. A metal corrugated sheet football pavilion opened c1959 replacing a wooden pavilion midway on the Western edge of the field. Extensions with toilets opened in May 1972 [SN142]. It was demolished following the opening of the Stretham Sports and Recreation Club pavilion & all-weather pitch which was built with a grant from East Cambs District Council, following prolonged discussion and opposition in 1996. The pitch includes a **tennis** court; previously a grass tennis court had been established following the formation of a tennis club in 1927. A **Scout** Headquarters forms part of the pavilion building. There was a village boy scout troop in 1915 but the present scout and guide groups owe much to Geoffrey Carter and his wife who formed a cub group in 1963. The Carter family continue to be active in their work with uniformed groups.

Black Hut

In 1923 A Stretham Social Club was formed. They acquired a wooden ex-army hut (the "Black Hut") which was erected on the north-western corner of the Recreation Ground. It offered billiards, table tennis, skittles & newspapers, opened 10am-10pm, & attracted a membership of over 60 people, making it one of the most successful ventures ever started in the village. The village's MP, James de Rothschild, presented a new cup for billiards. Within a few years "misunderstandings" arose and membership declined but the club continued up to the start of the Second World War. Subsequently the hut was used by the Women's' Institute and the British Legion until they acquired a new headquarters in the old Infants' school canteen. It was demolished in 1976 [SN21].

Crossways Garage

Opened in 1937 by Mr Pinion it continued after early failure. It was for sale in 1995 and is currently a used car sales lot.

WOOD LANE

Previous names: Berry Green 1851

East side

Baptist Chapel

By 1656 there was a good Baptist congregation which continued until about 1725. It had revived by 1772 when a new Baptist meeting house was built & they added new galleries in 1799. The old Baptist chapel was also taken down and new one opened on the site in September 1818. This continued until replaced by the existing building in 1935. See separate section on nonconformity

Kitson Gardens

A thatched cottage formerly stood beside the Baptist chapel which was once home to John Hopkins who sold eggs, butter and vegetables from a stall on Cambridge market. It was sold under the will of Robert Hopkins in 1907 [SN149]. In the 1960s the land behind the cottage was converted to a haulage yard used by Prime Godfrey's Sons, with office block, garage & workshop and the cottage was demolished to improve the access. They sold it in December 1969 & it was subsequently occupied by L.A. Jackson civil engineering ("Lewmac"). There was controversy in 1972 when the Baptist Chapel complained of the disruption of its services. County planners refused plans for an extension and the firm moved from the village in 1973. The site was developed by Reason Homes & houses on the estate were offered for sale in May 1995 at £59.950. It was named Kitson Gardens after Miss Kitson, a former village infants school teacher. [FOM p82]

No.4

Marlborough House, built 1999 replacing a house in which the Miss Kitsons lived [FOM p82]

No.6

The Manse : home of Baptist ministers until 1999.

No.8

Site of the cottage of Edward Lowe, village carrier from 1859. He died in 1927 after nearly 60 years on the road. The Baptist chapel sold the land for a building plot in May 1973. [SN143, 150, FOM p42]

Nos.10-22

Former council bungalows erected on the site of an orchard

West side

School

Officially opened in June 1978 and subsequently extended with a major expansion including a large new hall and additional classrooms opening in June 2000 – see separate notes

No.1-3

Built by Barry Elsdon on the site of an old cottage; one was for sale in July 1980 for £34,000. [SN174]

No.5

Built in 1931 according to a sale particular of October 1970, when it was priced at £3,950 [SN150]

**A CHRONOLOGY OF STRETHAM HISTORY,
compiled by Mike Petty, May 2000**

- 975 Anglo Saxon Chronicle refers to "Straetham" [SB37]
980c the Abbey of Ely acquired many lands purchased from the King, including Stretham [SB41 p17]
1086 Domesday Book : village assessed at 5 hides; land for nine ploughs. Ten villanes of 10 acres each & 11 villanes of one hide; these have 5 ploughs. There are 10 cottagers and two bondmen; meadow for 9 ploughs; pasture for the cattle of the village; from a fishery 3,250 eels & 7s.7d as a present; for all dues it is worth £9, when received £6, TRE £12. This manor lies in demesne of church of Ely [VCH p153] [SN47]
C12 after Norman invasion, probably 12th century, a building was erected on the Rectory Lawn; almost certainly was an ecclesiastical building inhabited by incumbent at Stretham sent from Ely. Could have been a tower house possibly connected with Hereward or Geoffrey de Mandeville, 1139-54 [SB56 p21]
1109 became Episcopal manor, one of smaller ones with no important tenants by military service [VCH p153]; Ethwold, Bishop of Winchester purchased the manor and presented it to the monks of Ely [SB33p9]
1133c Charter of Bishop Nigel confirming to the monks of Ely a gift of land made to them by Wigar the priest in Stretham [SB41 p285]
1140 during civil war between King Stephen and Empress Matilda the Isle of Ely was besieged, in 1141 the Bishop's knights were defeated by Geoffrey de Mandeville
1217 church valued at £16, £20 in 1254 & £26. 14s. 1291 [VCH p155]
1221 338 acres in demesne [VCH p153]
1222 rector Arnulf recorded – so church established [Stitt p6]
1251 466 ½ acres in demesne [VCH p153] : were four comparatively small fields names from points of compass, representing perhaps a subdivision of an original two-field vill, but the two fields of 1221 known as "Alvernercroft" and "Brocfeld" do not reappear in 1251. Is possible they were merged in "Suthfeld" where the demesne increased from 60 to 158 acres. This field was on fen side and the increase may have been partly due to reclamation. The lord's share of the meadow increased from 18 to 80 acres between 1221 and 1251. Demesne was stocked with 20 cows and a bull, 20 sows and a boar, and 300 sheep. In addition more than 100 belonged to tenants. Being on landward side of the Isle it did not make much progress during 13th century. Free tenants decreased from 23 to 19 and customaries holding a full virgate from 18 to 13. In each year were 7 half-virgaters, 9 cottars, and 1 half cottar. In 1251 marsh and fisheries produced £8 12s. yearly and £1.14.4 was due in rents.[VCH p153 SN160]
1251 notes from survey [SN153]
1270c church arches early English, date from about 1270 [Stitt p6]
1276 Thomas de Wymbych, rector in 1276, renounced all claimed to thithes from lands in the field of Ely held by men of Thetford [SB33]
129- Kyngestone memorial in chancel : the man who founded the chancel [Stitt p8] "Just at the bottom of the steps of the altar in N. wall is an arch and under it a raised tomb, covered with very old grey marble, with a bust and figure, which if ever there was any brass it is gone. Round it is an inscription in French – 'Nicol de Kyngestone, lies here, God on his soul have mercy, Amen' This person was founder or builder of the chancel and rector of the parish" – from Cole notes, 1748. {Note – This stone is still in its place and is very old and interesting, dating from the time of Edward I. The inscription, which is in Lombardic letters, is not quite legible in places and there is no date; and I am unable to find any record stating when he was rector of Stretham. In the Patent Rolls of Edward I is a statement that Nicholas de Kyngestone, Rector of Wikenden, resigned his living June 11, 1283. This is probably the same man and very likely it was to come to Stretham that he resigned Wikenden. There was also a Nicholas de Kyngestone, a knight whose name appears several times during the reign of Edward II, but he apparently belonged to Gloucestershire, and not to these parts; and this stone is clearly of an ecclesiastic and not a layman – Editor of Ely Rural Deanery Magazine, 1896} [SB41]
C14 By 14th century tower house was replaced with more conventional parsonage [SB56]
1300c **building** : church – listed [SB16]

- 1302 Manor seemed to have reached its zenith as source of profit about beginning C14; was midway in population scale; in 1302 899 works were commuted [VCH p.153]
- 1320c rectory was home of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster – old stained glass found [Stitt p12]
- 1320 Bishop judged to be the Lord of the Manor, wool tax; there was a Guild of All Saints [SN169]
- 1343 John Dymock of Stretham was admitted to holy orders for one of the churches of Thetford [SB33p10]
- 1344 had guild of Purification of Virgin [VCH p158] which made grants of victuals and clothing
- 1345 fisheries leased for £24 a year [SB41 p109]
- 1347 Black Death raged in area
- 1350 had guild of Corpus Christi [VCH p158] – are notes on it from 1389 when it maintained a common chest; all brothers and sisters gather in church to celebrate solemn mass, in 1388 2 brethren had assigned a rood & an acre of land to Nativity of Virgin [SB81]
- 1356 total receipts fell; fisheries “Estewater”, Hayfen & “Berlake” produced revenue but 20 acres of fennemedwe were flooded and worthless as was the ruined manor house of Strethambury. Bishop’s moveable property valued at £19 18s. [VCH p.153]
- 1358 dispute between royal and papal nominees to living, settled 1378 in favour of Robert de Stratton, papal candidate [VCH p155]
- 1381 Peasants’ revolt
- 1400c **building** : cross – listed [SB16]
- 1478 “Bishop Morton on way to take up appointment See of Ely, was overcome and walked barefoot; cross was removed from churchyard where it had formerly stood and placed in present position to mark site of Bishop’s self-humiliation ... it was undoubtedly the market cross surrounded by various shops and stalls, ale house, malting house, smithy” [Stitt p11]
- 1488 John & Richard Ryplingham, rectors of S. [Stitt p8 SN163]
- 1489 will of William Smyth, buried in church [SB33p19]
- 1496 John Lolham left house – profits keep his anniversary [SN169]
- 1497 brass of Joan Swann, mother of John & Richard Ryplingham, Rectors 1488 [SN47 Stitt p8]
- 1497 Cole says “At foot of the steps ... is a brass to the memory of the wife of William Ryplyngham, 1497” – ERDM editor says date and name had disappeared by 1896 – see Cole notes 1748
- 1500s rectory extended with south wing in brick; such enlargement common due increase in rectorial income & abolition of clerical celibacy [SB56]
- 1501 Thomas Gallant leased Manor [SN164]
- 1529 Goode held Manor [SN164]
- 1531 agreement between rector and inhabitants of Thetford re Harrimere chapel, gives Thetford right to own chaplain for most services except burials but to report to parish church on St James’ day .. [SB46 p64]
- 1537 Dissolution of the monasteries
- 1540c Stretham court of magistri – lists of property held by named people [SN177]
- 1541 value risen again, was £44 7s. and £61.14s. in 1548-9 [VCH p153]
- 1548 manor house let for £9 13.4, demesne for £2.1.6 & fisheries for £15.7.4 [VCH p153]
- 155- Richard Rysley, rector & inhabitants of Thetford allowed stipendary to have Thetford tithes but inhabitants to attend mother church at Stretham on St James’ Day & burial rights reserved to Stretham. [VCH p155]; highly probable the centre of the Rectory, containing the study, hall and room above was the work of Dr Rysley [Stitt p13 SB33p14]
- 1550 cottage with yard in common fields given for anniversaries were granted to William Moryce and Edward Isaak, Robert Hytche was tenant [VCH p155]
- 1553 acre of meadow for anniversaries of which churchwardens were tenants was granted to John Butler & Thomas Chaworth [VCH p155]
- 1553 Rysley leaves charity money, & house & property including Chequer’s Inn and blacksmith’s shop [VCH p159]
- 1555 value of church fallen to £22, including Thetford chapel [VCH p155]
- 1558 registers start : allotment deeds, Manor court
- 1558 Denny Abbey held lands in Stretham; 60 year lease granted to Sir Robert Chester of fisheries known as “Weremere”, “le Cote” and “Fourdewere” with appurtenances, ferries and osier holts [VCH p155]

- 1560 Mark Ridley (1560-1624) who became physician to Czar of Russia was born in Stretham; his father, the rector, was cousin of Bishop Ridley [VCH p152]
- 1563 “census” says 119 householders – with Thetford [VCH]
- 1567 dispute over tenancy of Manor House. Bishop Redman 1501-5 had leased it to Thomas Gallant for term which was still unexpired when Henry Gallant of Wilburton, Thomas’ grandson, claimed it against Robert March of Ely. March claimed on lease made about 1529 by Bishop West to Richard Goode and argued this lease cancelled previous one. Goode had bequeathed his tenancy to his sons Thomas & Richard jointly and sale of his moiety by Richard the younger to Thomas produce further complications. Judgement given in favour of March [VCH p153 SN164]
- 1571 Inventory of all lands which belong to parsonage of Stretham – field names etc [SB 46 SB110 p25]
- 1573 Evidences of Stretham as perused by Mr Parker Parson & churchwardens – [SB46 p56 SB110 p56]
- 1579 Thomas Hitch licensed as curate and schoolmaster [VCH p158]
- 1580 John Parker rector – old slab to be seen in 1748 [Stitt p8]
- 1581 fresh survey made of manor preparatory to detaching it from possessions of the see. Rents of assize yielded £16.15.6; total capital value £1,656 at 40 years purchase but considered the value might be increased. Fisheries let to Richard Arkenstall, nephew of late Bishop Cox at £40 a year – therefore of £1,600 capital value but estimated they would £40 above this. The Berrystead or manor house was valued at 40 times its annual rent - £486.13.4. Demesne, or what left of it was still let at £2.1.6 . Tenancy of Manor House in dispute – see 1567 [VCH p153 SN164]
- 1586c sale of Towne House ... deeds of 3 tenements or towne houses which were delivered to Mark Ridley, parson; who then sells to feoffees for Upton tenement for £40 ... used money received from Upton tenement and the towne houses ... iii item : there is to be received x s. of the 3 tenements in Stretham which is to be given to such poor people as shall be thought in need ...[SB46 p58-62]
- 1586c new ditch made from Berrystead Closes to River Ouse [SN177.6]
- 1591 church bell of 1591 was replaced in 1876 [VCH p157]
- 1592 memorial to John Parker in church – see Cole notes, 1748
- 1598 memorial to wife of Sandys – see 1748
- 1600s **building** : cottage 30 High St – listed; cottage 36 High St; White Lion cottage; Wood Lane barn [SB16]
- 1600 when manor alienated from see of Ely the avowson (right to appoint vicar) remained with Bishop Alienated to Crown by Bishop Heton, possibly as the price of his appointment to the Bishopric by Queen Elizabeth after the See had been vacant 18 years; during vacancy revenues went to Royal purse [VCH p155 Stitt p5]
- 1601 during Episcopal vacancy 1581-1600 the lessee of manor was Richard Drake who sub-let to Henry Vernon. He wanted to purchase the manor of which he was tenant. The actual grantee that year was Sir Miles Sandys. He was soon in dispute with his tenants over common rights [VCH p.153 SB100 Stitt p5]
- 1603c Sandys granted right to enclose 100 acres Hay Fen, measured from ditch made 17 years ago called New Ditch [SN177.6]
- 1605 map, **Sandys** dispute 1605-1610 – *Common rights* ...[SB40]
- 1607 by degree of Exchequer Sandys was empowered to inclose his demesne and 1,600 acres were to be set aside as common pasture for tenants of the manor. Holt, Lazier, Chair, Starlock & Hay fens specified as being included in settlement. [VCH p153]
- 1607 Decree of Court of Exchequer relating to the Manor of Stretham ... tenants complain against Sir Miles Sandys Lord may erect one cottage at the new intended ferry allowing tenants price of ferryage as they have enjoyed at old ferry – great details in SB46
- 1607c survey of all common fens and commonable fields [SB46 p76]
- 1607 Sandys divided commons, claimed fisheries [SB46 p104 SB89 p253 SB110 p9]
- 1609 complaints made that number of working horses which might be fed on commons was insufficient & laid down that tenant of every commonable house could pasture 5 such horses with extra 1 for every 15 acres, up to 60 a. that he cultivated. Rector allowed an additional 3 horses. The lord allowed 5 horses in all [VCH p154 SN110 SB89]
- 1609 “Mr Laurence for his parsonage of Stretham to supply 1 petr.furnd.” – note of horse and foot with armour to be in readiness to be viewed and trained according to their abilities 4 April 1609 [SN177 SB110]
- 1614 terrier of land, meadow & marsh [SB46 p34]

- 1614 orders & bylaws [SB46 SB89 p265-7]
1615 church bell of 1615 was replaced in 1876 [VCH p157]
1622 Nicholas Felton inducted
1622 orders and bylaws define rights in greater detail – each commoner was entitled to pasture 6 cows & 2 weaning calves & extra cow if in possession of a bull, in the “heardwalke”; also pasture 8 working horses or mares with foals in Starlock Hay Fen, which had become horse pasture. Cattle might be hired to make up the permitted total, but pasturing of cattle from outside village for money payment was not allowed. The ditch of Barlake, between the cow and horse pastures was to be communally scoured each year. Cattle not allowed in horse pasture nor horses in cow; pigs not on either. Chair, Hole & Lazier fens – commons set aside for cattle pasture were not to be used for turf cutting. Fines imposed including 40s for trapping fish in “netts or engines” in the breaches and gulls of the fen banks [VCH p154 SN5 SB46 SB89 p275 SB110]
1623 Copies of several ancient documents relating to the rectory & bylaws for regulating the commons, including a terrier of lands belonging to parsonage in 1571 – [SB 46]
1626 memorial to Margaret Tyas – see 1748 [SN169]
1630 Sir Miles Sandys & son levied fine upon manor [VCH p154 SN129]
1630 list curates to 1693 [SN163]
1634 Manor court documents to 1645 CRO [SN153]
1635 a market and two annual fairs were established in 1634 and were in existence 40 years later; charter 1635 .. grants to Sir Miles Sandys ... one market to be held on Thursday every week ... and also two fairs annually on feast of St Mark & two days following and another Feast of St Michael and two days following; with court of pie powder, together with reasonable tolls, stallage, picage for stalls or saleable things ...[VCH p152 SB33 p6]
1638 Oliver Cromwell proclaimed Lord of the Fens
1638 complaint that a chapel erected by Sir Miles Sandys has not yet been consecrated
1641 complaint of Rector Nicholas Felton against Sir Myles Sandys – has inclosed lands & stocked with sheep and cattle & avoid tithes so rector cannot pay debts due King & is utterly remediless [SB46 p79]
1644 Rev Nicholas Felton was ejected from the living - accused of getting drunk, gambling & paying too much attention to the wife of his curate; also accused of persuading a parishioner not to join Cromwell's Regiment & soldiers found arms and a barrel of gunpowder in his house [SN47]
1644 “Nicholas Felton who was rector of Stretham from AD 1623, was articulated against in 1643 ‘ for being a strict observer of the late illegal innovations in the worship of God, having caused his parishioners to spend £12 to rail in the Communion table and make new steps to the altar, himself bowing three times as he went up, and as often as he came down, to the great offence of his parishioners; for reading the King’s declaration, and refusing to read the ordinance of Parliament, and left off praying for the same”. [Cole 1748] He was ejected from his living in 1644 by a warrant of the Earl of Manchester, & Matthew Clarke, who was approved by the Assembly of Divines, was instituted in his room [Carter]
1644 Miles Sandys was on committee for New Model Army under Fairfax 1644-46
1647 Dorothy Ellis - witch - the Devil appeared to her in form of a great cat & she gave it her blood; she bewitched the cattle of Thomas Hitch - which died - and took the life of the daughter of Thomas Salter and made his mother lame [SN47]
1650c **building** Home farm mid C17 – listed [SB16]
1650 Rev Robert Carr inducted
1654 younger Sandys dies without issue, manor passed, probably by purchase to Sir Charles Sedley, the Restoration dramatist and wit, who with wife Catharine (Savage) was dealing with it in 1658 [VCN p154 SN164]
1656 “there was a good Baptist church which in 1656 was under the pastoral care of John Tabram. It appears to have been numerous and flourishing as on Oct 26th Messrs J. Denne & E. Mayle paid them a visit and assisted in the ordination of two teachers Thomas Bedford & Robert Gardiner, and one deacon Thos Gotobed. Bedford soon removed to Hawson and fell into divers immoralities, which obliged the brethren to withdraw their communion with him, and though he afterwards earnestly applied for re-admission into their society, yet his conduct not being consistent with his profession, he was refused [SN47]
1658 6-700 acres enclosed by the Lord of the Manor

- 1659 Sir William Walker & John Hampton claim to hold all fens free from tithes payable to Robert Carr [SB46 p101 SB110 p30]
- 1659 Sir Walter Walker was joint lord with John Hampton. Walker was a Judge of the Courts of Admiralty & of Probate; his grandson, also Walter, was vouchee in a recovery of the manor in 1694 & died without issue before 1703. About 1658 Manor passed in moieties between Sir William Walker and family of Hanson, and the latter moiety passing to the Harbords became sub-divided. [VCH p154 Stitt p5 SN164]
- 1662 Rev Brunsell inducted [SB46 p101]
- 1662-78 Anne wife of Dr Brunsell, rector 1662-78, sister of Christopher Wren; he built her a house in Chapel St
- 1664 Brunsell in dispute with tenants over non-payment of tithes; bill against Gotobed, Langford ... for subtracting tithes due rector; Walker drew up their answer inveigled them to Join a suit against Rector hoping to share tithes amongst themselves ... claimed mere and lands paid 30/- lieu of tithes, rector believes mere grounds were anciently fishings and covered with water until dividing of commons by Sir MS about 1607. When Queen Elizabeth granted Manor to Samuel Sandys and Miles Sandys 30/- was tenth of value of mere ... parson submitted to award in Dec 1666 which turned out very injurious to him, but he performed his part, however neither Walker nor any of others observed it or paid rector what should have done ... so parson is in far worse condition than before and church and successor parsons are totally disinherited and defrauded of just rights -&- commoners and inhabitants prejudiced against parson ...tithe less than value when Bishop of Ely conveyed manor to Queen Elizabeth or diocese conveyed it to Samuel &- Miles Sandys ... hopes they declare award void [SB46 p102]
- 1666 Brunsell submits to award of Sir Charles Harbord which he claims was drafted by Walker [SB46 p106]
- 1667 monument in church to Ann Brunsell, Feb 1667; Brunsell in dispute with tenants [SB46 p110]
- 1667 Philip Harbord's half part of manor [SB110 p32]
- 1669 dissenters of unknown denomination met by stealth and in the night [VCH p158]
- 1672 house of William Outlar licensed for Congregational worship, but soon died out [VCH p158]
- 1673 memorial to Richard Barry, died 9 Mar 1673 aged 33, completely disappeared by 1748 [Stitt p8]
- 1675 Ogilby "Britannia" says have market and two annual fairs & village "somewhat scattering" [VCH p152]
- 1675 Dr Brunsell's petition to Bishop against Sir Wm Walker &- Jn Hampson, Lords of Manor ... "Sir Walter Walker out of a greedy and covetous design to get themselves more than did of right belong to them did in the time of the late usurper, Richard Cromwell (1659) exhibit their bill against Robert Carr, rector. claiming to hold all fens absolutely free from tithes" [SB46 p99 SB110 p56]
- 1676 Thetford residents summoned to appear before Bishop of Ely at London re Brunsell petition [SB110 p37]
- 1676 census says 428 communicants with Thetford; 29 of the 428 persons of communicant age were nonconformist [VCH p158]
- 1678 monument in church to Henry Brunsell – see Cole notes, 1748
- 1686 church plate includes chalice and paten of 1686 [VCH p157]
- 1691 will Dame Mary Walker [SN165]
- 1693 Robert Drake marriage settlement [SN153]
- 1696 Dr Ralph Perkins, rector -1727, was great benefactor to Ely cathedral library and various ecclesiastical charities; gave paten, 1712 [VCH p152]
- 1696 fire : damage assessed at £2,170 caused and general collection made by brief [VCH SN50]
- 1700s whole of rectory remodelled, western end of original 14th century range demolished & building extended south with eastward projecting wings & great deal of refenestration [SB56]
- 1700c **building** : 14 Read St – listed [SB16]
- 1703 Walter Walker jun & died without issue before 1703 [VCH p154]
- 1715 Thomas King gives 11 acres to churchwardens for use of poor, Upton Fine land [VCH p159 SN49]
- 1716 charity founded by Martha Digby – but see 1727 [SN49 SN169 SB22]
- 1725 congregation of Baptists under Mr Clark met but ceased to be organised body after his death c1725 [VCH p158]
- 1727 new church bell [VCH p157]

- 1727 Lady Effingham Howard bequeaths to charity [VCH p159]; notes on the Effinghams & land [SB33p15]
- 1727 Martha Digby's will gives land to poor [VCH p159]; deeds [SN49]
- 1728 Charles Thomas rector, described by Cole as "a man of parts, but of an odd and whimsical disposition" – died 1771 & will contained complicated instructions about his burial [VCH p152]
- 1735 table of benefactors over altar put up by Mr Thomas, rector 1727, his tombstone on S side aisle [Stitt p9 SB18]
- 1741 Waterbeach Level Act passed; sets up internal drainage commissioners [SB31]
- 1748 William Cole visits Stretham & compiles detailed notes on history – see appendix
- 1754c Bishop Mawson was first to make a road practical for wheeled carriages from Ely to Cambridge. He procured much of the gravel from Barton Hill, Ely [Stitt p12]
- 1758 "Mr Walker's estate" purchased by Earl of Hardwicke for £500 [VCH p154 SN164 SN163]
- 1759 Gould at Manor till - 1761 [SN164]
- 1760 will John Walker [SN166]
- 1760c itinerant Baptist preachers held meetings in a barn and later disused malthouse [VCH p158]
- 1763 Stretham ferry stopped in consequence Act of Parliament & bridge built instead; road began to supplant the Aldreth road towards end of C17. In 1763 task of bringing it up to contemporary standards begun with gift of £200 from Alderman Riste of Cambridge and completed some 20 years later at cost of upwards of £7,000 (minute books to 1822 are at CRO & draft 1845-52) [VCH p151 SB72]
- 1766 new church bell [VCH p157]
- 1766 another Waterbeach Level drainage act; considerable part of common near a bridge that has lately been built is frequently overflowed; 1st meeting at Chequers; Clay Pits to pass to Commissioners & to be sold to fund work; Charles Gould to build bridge at or near present ford; penalties if any destroy works [SB31 SB61 SN163]
- 1767 sale by auction, Ferry house [SN153]
- 1767 Wm Read purchases Ho [SN153]
- 1769 Wm Cole describes floods around Waterbeach parish [SB31]
- 1770s buildings : Oakley House; Plantation Gate house; initials W.R.E. & M.R.; 1 Pump Lane – listed; central portion rectory altered with new windows [SB16]
- 1771 serious fire at Malting House, Mr Lowe. Destroys malting office, farmhouses, barns, outhouses etc, 23 May [CH]
- 1771 James Brown rector [SN163]
- 1772 Baptist meeting house built, enlarged by galleries 1799; under Joseph Howlett of Cottenham congregation made rapid strides; was organised on regular basis in 1801 when 14 original members reinforced by 7 newcomers. Doctrine was Calvinistic & practised open communion'; meeting house rebuilt 1818 but earlier involvement - Sennitt leader of singing [VCH p158]
- 1772 Mr Merry, wildfowler, a truly scientific conductor of this kind of sporting; his knowledge of the haunts was most precise, his navigation of his punt, judgement and assiduity were alike conspicuous; frequently while shooting parties with other guides were wearying themselves with towing ... all the birds were disturbed, Old Merry was steering his punt silently to the scene of the action; and in the fogs which are so thick as to exclude objects at the smallest distance, or in the dark, he was equally collected. As a marksman he was extraordinarily expert; with a gun upwards of six feet in the barrel, and that placed on the stocks by the village carpenter, and altogether of a weight which nothing but a most powerful arm could extend and elevate, would kill a snipe flying ... Old Merry had not been much troubled with education, rude as the country in which his occupation lay... had innate civility ... fund of anecdotes .. dog ... [SB1]
- 1773 William Read considerable farmer died in prime of life [CH]
- 1774 William, 5th Baron Byron of Rochdale (poet Byron was member of this family) sold part of Manor to Sir Charles Gould who inherited the other moiety which had passed through the Hampson & Harbord families. He took the name Morgan on elevation to baronetcy & Stretham portion of his estates, 1,213 of the 4,085 acres in the parish eventually devolved upon G.G. Morgan, sometime MP for Brecon (died 1845). Sir Charles Morgan occasionally lived in Plantation House, formerly a seat of the Harbords [VCH Stitt p5 SN164]
- 1774 woman whipped for false reeling [CH]
- 1775 by now three drainage mills erected – Upper, Gate & Dowload or Dollar [SB47]
- 1776 death Samuel Granger, eminent farmer [CH]

- 1777 C.N. Cole report on South Level : “a mill is placed which throws water out of Waterbeach Level into the West River; anciently there was a natural drain for the waters of this Level and a sluice was placed to prevent the river waters in times of flood from flowing up into the country. Though that fen lays by the side of the Grant the state of the Level was such that this river was its drain. Stretham Common Fen Mill is situated above this and discharges the water off that common into the West River. The Act for draining the commons is one of the few District Acts that have answered the end proposed & commons are increased one fourth in their value. Above this stands the Meer Mill; the discharge from it into this river is almost lost ... stands where anciently a drain came from Stretham Mere into the river. A fair bridge hath been built over the West River by Sir Charles Gould. It is one among many instances of his public spirit & maintains a communication between Stretham Mow Fen & Stretham Feeding Commons & prevents the michiefs that often happened from driving the stock and conveying the produce of the land across the river. It was in this place, Base Lake, Roman road leaving Denny Abbey to the west passed over the Ouse. Dr Stukely traced it through the morass on both sides the river and late Mr Duntborne did the same. At what time this road was deserted is not known, but when ever it was the owner of the ferry, where Mr Stanley’s Ferry-House now stands, removed the ferry to that, where it hath continued ever since until it was taken away ... by Turnpike. Includes survey of river [SB58]
- 1779 workhouse managers required [CH]
- 1779 Edward Granger, principal farmer, died [CH]
- 1779 church repaired; in uppermost parts of East window were several escalot shells; Sandys chapel still there though most of armorial bearing were lost; was table of benefactions. On May 8th 1779 a faculty was granted to the rector and churchwardens to pull down “a building formerly used as a School house and sometime as a burial place adjoining the north side of the chancel, which includes one arch of the aisle” and to throw the ground into the churchyard. This was done and the monuments perished – See *Faculty Books* vol.1, p107 [VCH p156 Stitt p9 SB41 SN163]
- 1780c **building** : barn rear 13 & 15 High St, initials T.A. listed [SB16]
- 1784 death rector Rev D.V. Brown, master of Pembroke college [CH]
- 1786 death of Joseph Read, leaves Orchard House to 4-year-old son William Sayers Read [SN50]
- 1789 was private school in village [VCH p158]
- 1793 house & effects late Eleanor Walker sold – well built dwelling house, land [CH SN142]
- 1794 Vancouver report on agriculture : East of village 100 acres enclosed pastures, soil deep black mould, lying upon gault & rented at 20/- an acre. The village on south is bounded by fen. West & adjoining town are two open common fields, the soil of which generally resembles that of pastures described; contain about 400 acres, rented at 10/- acres. Skirty land, common included amounts to 200 acres & about 600 acres of fen land. Fen is remarkably good quality but reduced to small value by very defective state of drainage. The open field land is kept very well drained by a wise regulation of appointing fen reeves who have the authority to order any drain to be opened and the expense of those to whom they belong. Ash and elm flourish extremely well, and were the intermixed property laid together, this timber would be very generally cultivated. Under the present circumstances of this district, and from a rotation of three crops before a fallow, the general produce upon the highland is 24 bushels of wheat weighing 50lb per bushel, 28 bushels barley weighing 56lb bush, 20 bushel peas and beans per acre. There are 122 houses, 150 families & 750 inhabitants, where poor’s rates amount to two shillings in the pound
- 1795 windmill incendiary letter [CH]
- 1795 Green End area flooded; drainage mills in poor state [SB]
- 1797 tollbars to be erected on river bank [CH]
- 1797 Waterbeach level drainage act [SB31]
- 1798 drainage mill near Stretham bridge for sale [CH]
- 1798 were two schools, one for infants by John Sabbatin, a dissenter with a harmless reputation and one for older children under Robert Hopkins a churchman of fair and inoffensive character [VCH p158]
- 1799 ventriloquist passes through [CH]
- 1799 Baptist chapel galleries erected
- 1802 death of Rector, John Swaine [CH]
- 1803 application for turnpike from Stretham to Haddenham [CH]
- 1803 Crown pub sold [CH]

- 1805 Arthur Young report states Waterbeach level agriculture, doubts profitable to enclose open fen because banks so poor [SB31]
- 1808 death of Robert Hopkins, schoolmaster [CH]
- 1809 Waterbeach Level committee examine state of Level [SB31]

- 1812 death of Rector Caesar Morgan [CH]
- 1812 invoice for flour ground at Camps White Mill & sold in village shop; also invoices for grocery bought wholesale and sold by Joseph Howlett at Stretham [SB33p25]
- 1813 13 lots of property sold, including Bedlam's Yard by Gov of poor of Ely [CH SN142]
- 1813 Waterbeach Level act increase taxes [SB31]
- 1814 Wesley chapel built by public subscription [VCH p158] deeds [SN58]
- 1814 second drainage mill erected near Dowload mill [SB31]
- 1816 Littleport riots
- 1816 Rev James Heckford opened school sons of gentlemen [CH]
- 1818 new rector, J.H. Sparke [CH]
- 1818 Baptist chapel rebuilt [VCH p158] [Stitt p14]; old one taken down and new erected on former site; opened September ... list preachers [SB33p12]
- 1820 "property in Stretham is extremely valuable" [CH]
- 1820 list of field names [CH]
- 1823c **building** : Orchard House – listed [SB16]
- 1824 rectory attics probably work of Rev J. Henry Sparke, rector [Stitt p13]
- 1824 Rysleys charity, feofees as appointed – Sir Charles Morgan, G.G. Morgan, Rev. Sparke, John Reed, Edward Grainger, John Dimock sen etc [SB33p17]
- 1826 William Edwards Read marries Mary Ann Granger [SN50]
- 1827 Henry Hervey Baber appointed rector, came permanently on his retirement later; Baroness Burdett Coutts stayed at rectory, 'next to Victoria the most wonderful woman of the day' – Edward VI [SN55 SB33p19]
- 1828 map of rectory dating from 1828 shows present orchard behind coach house as formal laid out gardens [SB56]
- 1829 consider moving turnpike gate at Stretham Ferry [CH]
- 1829 Rev T.C.W. Swaine departs [CH]
- 1829 Waterbeach Level ask Butterley company to tender for engine [SB47]

- 1831 **building** : Stretham engine house – listed [SB16]
- 1831 **building** : Green Ways, Green End – listed [SB16]
- 1831c Calcraft the executioner takes Lynn Rover coach, having hanged agricultural labourer for incendiarism at Ely [SB33p34]
- 1832 engine finished / developments in drainage windmills; mere mill sale; E. Stanley supt. (till 1880) [CH SB31 SB47]
- 1832 W.E. Read retires, sells equipment [CH]
- 1832 widening Turnpike road [SN142]
- 1833 Thetford inclosure riot [CH][SN142]
- 1834 William Edwards reads mortgages property, including Orchard House; borrows £5,000 from Edward Thompson
- 1834 Wm Wright & family allowed to emigrate to America at expense parish [SN117]
- 1834 Inclosure Act; George Gould Morgan, Lord, Rev Henry Hervey Baber rector, Wm Edwards Read, Thomas Waddelow Granger, Feofees of Parson's Charity, Feofees of Stretham, William Wright, William Blench, Thomas Archer named; Read Tansley Camps owns mill– [SB32].
- 1835 Inclosure award receives Royal ascent; process starts. [CH]
- 1835 letter urges roads to be made straight [CH]
- Digby charity granted present allotment lands - rules [SN116]
- 1836 schedule of houses belonging to Overseers [SN117]
- 1837 H.H.Baber resigns as Keeper Books BM to devote himself entirely to parish [VCH p152]
- 1837 new tollgate to be erected near junction Waterbeach parish; toll for foot passengers abolished [CH][SB72]
- 1837 Parson's Charity sell off property, including Bell pub [CH]

- 1837 **Inclosure** open fields measuring 2,390 acres inclosed; was about half the total area of the parish. The fields were named Crouch Field (E & W of Ely rd), Whitecross and Brook Fields (N & S of Wilburton Rd) & Meadow Field (E of Cambridge road), There were also open commons and fens. Snoot common, Middle common, Elford Closes, Chear Fen & Lazier fen lay at extreme south of parish and Starlock Hay Fen common and Holt Fen in SE. There were 78 allottees of whom the chief were William Edwards Read (228 acres), George Gould Morgan, lord of the Manor (173 acres), Thomas Waddelow Granger (142 a) & the Ely Feofees (135 a) [VCH p.152 SN20 SN117]
- 1837 sketch of church & cross
- 1838 under Inclosure some of Richard Rysley charity replaced by allotment of 30½ acres in Starlock Hay Fen Common for benefit of school [VCH p159]
- 1838 Queen Victoria's coronation [CH SN132]
- 1839 manor court of G.G. Morgan & W.E.Read [CH]
- 1839 Red Lion sale - in trade 100 years [CH SN132]
- 1839 Marquis of Granby, new built, Short Lane, sold [CH]
- 1839 Charity Commissioners report : Chequers pub let to John Russell; commissioners have been granted land Inclosure, intended to cause this allotment to be divided into small allotments to the poor [SB22]
- 1839 sell parish houses & money towards expense of Union workhouse [SN117]
- 1840c **building** : barn, Chapel St – listed [SB16]
- 1840c list stagecoaches from Ely, which passed through Stretham [SB33p23]
- 1840 D.J. Plumb 'The parish of Stretham, 1840-1890' [SB39]
- 1840 Seven Wonders" beer shop, Stretham Ferry sold [CH]
- 1840 Mere Mill removed when bricks needed to build house for steam engine stoker [SB31]
- 1841 Marquis of Granby pub, sold [CH SN142]
- 1841 incendiary fire W.E. Read chaff house [SN142]
- 1841 ploughing matches start – 7th yr 1848 [CH]
- 1841 census analysed [SB39]
- 1841 Plantation farm W.E. Read & John Dimock reduce stock [SN142]
- 1841 death John Dimock sen., farmer [SN142]
- 1842 Black Eyed Susan sold [CH]
- 1842 Thetford Methodist chapel quarterly subscriptions, 1842 – [SB2]
- 1843 Ancient Shepherds group formed [CH]
- 1843 **building** : Coach house, Chapel St, initials E.D., listed [SB16]
- 1844 Charles in Oak pub destroyed by fire, April [CH]
- 1844 major fire rages along Top Street; great damage, sufferers [CH SN142]**
- 1844 **building** : Hylton House – listed [SB16]
- 1844 four cottages of Dr Ryseleys in Top St built 1844; at that time was called Lincolns Garden. Contract details [SB33p17]SN132]
- 1845 windmill sale [CH]
- 1845 death G.G. Morgan, sometime MP for Brecon who owned 1,213 of the 4,085 acres in the parish; executors held manorial rights 6 years later [VCH p154]
- 1845 railway to Ely opened
- 1845 fire Bent's Lane [CH]
- 1845 particulars & values occupiers property – CRO P147/11/14 [SN153]
- 1846 National Society report says 244 children receiving education; most at church school on weekdays, weekday evenings & Sundays in hired premises, many part time; staff of eight employed, lack of endowments prevented real progress in 1846 & in 1851 rector is sole private contributor [VCH p158]
- 1846 Stretham Engine third boiler added [SB47]
- 1846 bond Wm Wright, John Brooks Russell & Samuel Wright, hirer of tolls, Turnpike [SB67 d29]
- 1846 sale building plot, Bell St [SN142]
- 1849 surveyors to make sewers throughout village [SN117]
- 1850 fires, Chapel street area; four fires in four weeks, work of incendiaries, London detective investigates. Three fires about Michaelmas, 1st in Tithe Rick Yard burnt the Red Lion, 2nd begun in Mr Dimmock's rick yard burnt some houses in lane opposite, 3rd was up Cage Lane burnt Murfitts & Coys premises; all supposed to be incendiarism. Committee of enquiry by vestry, appoint watchmen,

- consider parish engine & 3 fire hooks; 4 fires within a month & large proportion saved if had engine – to buy [[CH SN117 SN142 SB75]
- 1850 Stretham Engine scoop wheel increased to 33 ft [SB47]
- 1851 shortly before 1851 tithes commuted for land; as were Thetford [VCH p155]
- 1851 newly erected pub south end Red Lion Lane [CH]
- 1851 sale newly erected Royal Oak pub with inexhaustible supply of brick earth [CH]
- 1851 sale Coy lands, Top St [SN142]
- 1851 fire stack [CH]
- 1851 was Baptist Sunday school [VCH p158]
- 1851 census shows 250 inhabited houses, 4 uninhabited and 11 being built; pop 1,231, increase of 124 over 1841; were 14 beer houses & 4 old pubs [CH]; census analysed [SB39]
- 1851 Richard Freeman, builder Ely, agrees Rev. Baber to build barn and stables opposite rectory for £190 [SB67 d18]
- 1851 Samuel Lyon, Norfolk, deposits title deeds at Soham as security for a loan of £800 from Ann Read, spinster [SB67 d20]
- 1854 plan for shop, office & coal yard, Front Street [SN49]
- 1854 Wm Edwards Read borrows £8,000 from Robert Ives to pay off Thompson, based on his property [SN50]
- 1855 agreement to build toll house on side turnpike road from S to Wilburton near junction two parishes [SB67 d19 SB72]
- 1855 fires blamed on tramp and lucifer matches [CH]
- 1855 bond Wm Wright, hirer of tolls & sureties Isaac Murfitt, higgler & John Denton for tolls at Stretham Ferry Gate, Sutton & Witcham [SB67 d30]
- 1855 old Cage to be pulled down; suggest road in and out of town pond [SN117]
- 1857 theft from Ancient Shepherd's box, Red Lion [SN142]
- 1858 barrister fights for allotments in Grunty Fen for the poor as they have been used for last 20 years [CH SN142]
- 1858 death of William Edwards Read; leaves insufficient funds to pay funeral expenses & discharge mortgage; executors raise £2,000 on security of property from Robert Ives; no property to be sold until youngest child Joseph reaches 21 years [SN4 SN50]
- 1858 bond Wm Wright, hirer of tolls & sureties Isaac Murfitt, higgler & John Denton for renewal tolls at Stretham Ferry Gate, Sutton & Witcham [SB67 d30]
- 1858 Charles Sennitt begins shop keeping [SB75]
- Robert Norman takes Tiled House Farm, Berridge to Engine Farm, King & Wm Charles High Fen Farm, Wm Driver Bridge House [SB75]
- 1858 Henry Bultitaft cuts his throat, 23rd July [SB75]
- 1858 Thomas Waddelow Granger dies 21 Nov; sale 1859, 26 Jan made nearly £2,000 [SB75 SN142]
- 1859 Wm Edwards Read executors borrow further £1,000 from Clement Francis
- 1859 fires in cottages & at wheelwrights, reward offered over arson at Mary Gibbons [CH]; Fire in Green End, Matthew Sargent had a pig burnt – it ran into firing lodge and was burnt to death, but pig sty saved; his house was burnt & the widow Gibbons house too, 27 Mar 1859 [SB75]; fire up Brooks Lane burnt barn and hay belonging Wm Blinch 16 Jul; fire Woottens 30 Oct [SB75]
- 1859 John Pumphrey killed by lightning, Thomas Sennitt also cut down [SB75]
- 1859 Ann Granger, Thetford died, Nov 13th; they would not let the corpse go in church [SB75]
- 1859 Grunty fen inclosure, labourers strike over pay, Ely fear riot [CH]
- 1858 Walker Green killed on Ely road not far from sand pits [SB75]
- 1859 Edward Lowe starts as carrier [SN142]
- 1860 woman dies of typhus [CH]
- 1860 water nearly to top of river banks, May, December very cold [SN40]
- 1860 Charles Sennitt baptised at Ferry Bridge, 6 May [SB75]
- 1860 Grunty Fen pay Littleport & Downham to take their water [ES 31.10.1941]
- 1861 incendiarism - 7 cottages destroyed; onlookers take no part, area covered by dense mass of old buildings; fire in the Green End burnt two tenements in Red Lion Yard, & others; supposed to be set on fire 28 Sep [SB75]
- 1861 lordship divided between Lt-Col. Sir G.H.S. Willis & Rev W.N.T. Marsh in right of their wives who were Morgan's two daughters [VCH p154 SN164]

- 1861 hurricane, Feb [SN40]
- 1861 large sale property, Jun [SN40]
- 1861 census analysed [SB39]
- 1861 collect subscriptions repair church spire & tower [SN117]
- 1862 incendiarism, Green End [CH]; Jan : another fire Zachariah Rowell's old house & small lodge; he was insured for £50 but sent in bill for £120; Jun 3 : fire in Green End at old Mrs Drever's [SN40] – diary records [SB38p52]; 10 January burnt Dimmock's cottage supposed to be set on fire [SB75]; 3rd June, Driver's premises burnt Green End, not a very satisfactory account about it [SB75]
- 1862 Mrs Read buried 21st Jan [SB75]
- 1862 baptism at Ferry, four baptised [SN40]
- 1863 Royal wedding celebrations [CH SN40]
- 1863 Dec : terrible windy, blew thatch off buildings wholesale [SN40] work on windmill [SN153]
- 1864 coprolites
- 1864 death of David Parish, correspondent, schoolmaster etc [CH SN40 SB35]
- 1864 mud knee deep – Green End road used by 100 men and small farmers; Capt Beville offers to repair [CH]
- 1864 start Grunty Fen railway [CH]
- 1865 consider steps make Gravel Road & onwards to Mr Sutton railway crossing & road leading to Grunty Fen called Broad Balk into hard roads [SN117]
- 1865 Orchard House & estates W.E. Read sold by executors to discharge mortgage, now youngest son 21; comprises 463 acres including Gravel Farm, Dimock's Cote Farm, Luke Curtis grocers shop; Orchard House occupied by Frederick Grainger who buys Orchard House etc for £880 [CH SN50] sales [SN149 SN142]
- 1865 Wrights sell up, leaving Red Hill Farm [CH]
- 1865 several children died with the crook [SB75]
- 1865 terrible cattle plague causes havoc ... seems no cure; day of prayer – not happening here yet [SN40]
- 1866 cattle plague, only 23 out of 36 herds escape, Mr Muncey, opulent farmer suffers severely; Sennitt lost all his cow stock, Hazel's dead, Fyson, Plantation, has lost many - more details [SN40 SB75 CH]
- 1866 Methodist chapel – formerly 5 cottages, for school house & play area behind old chapel [SN58]
- 1866 Grunty fen railway opens [CH]
- 1866 steeple repaired & new weathercock put up, strong wind blows scaffolding [Stitt p9 SB75]
- 1866 John Wesley got his foot smashed by threshing engine, Nov.3rd [SB38p52 SB75]
- 1866 John Denton purchased 30 acres of field 615 & rents other for coprolites along 2 mile stretch from Stretham Ferry Bridge to Stretham along northern bank of Ouse and on to Lt Thetford. In 1870 Thos Hall anxious to get started on new seam & erects washing mill and shed. Quite possible that other local farmers had fossils raised, employing own labourers; where found on larger scale they invited contractor & he brought gangs. This led to confrontations, incendiarism. Ramp erected up river bank to barges. 1871 first documented agreement; yearly tenant, Wm Drever compensated for land out of cultivation, work up to 15 feet at 2 ½ acres a year for 4 years. 1871 census shows only 6 men diggers and 2 girls as pickers. Stretham coprolites never exceed £100 per acre. Working west of Manor Farm prior to 1874 on site present sewage works & further East. Others under Middle Common, NE of Ferry Bridge and mile south of church were worked between 1875 and 1883 & further E on other side Green End Road. Over 7 acres worked opposite Stretham Engine & in work before 1891. On S bank of Ouse workings below Stretham Ferry Bridge worked before 1882. Was revival of work between 1879-82 after which imports brought prices down. 1887 OS map shows disused Fossil mills not far from Royal Oak which would have been frequented by diggers. Was further revival at end of 1880s when due to high unemployment some landowners allowed work to continue at reduced royalties. 1891, Nov 7 p7 CIP reports that work stopped because of rain "These small works are great boon to village as they employ all the surplus labour which otherwise would be out of work during winter. Is remains of bank left when work finished & some uneven fields [SB59]
- 1867 Rector gives new East window complaints that when steeple repaired & new weathercock on top - "ugly mushroom" [CH] painted window put in church by Baber [SB75] by Preedy, description of [SN129]; address, description of scenes [SN117]
- 1867 creditors late Frederick Granger of Orchard House to submit claims, Grange Farm sold; he died after an operation for the gravel; House bought by John Wright for £600; shop sold Briggs Savage; sale [SN149 SN142 CH]
- 1867 Methodist treat – 460 [CH]

- 1867 vestry recommend voluntary subscriptions for colouring walls and ceilings & repairing pillars north side church [SN117]
- 1868 July very hot, no grass for stock, carrots dying early; harvest so hot people couldn't work [SN40]
- 1868 Samuel Canham got arm cut off by threshing machine at Wm Wright's threshing barns, 13 Jan [SB38p52 SB75]
- 1868 William Morriss & family went to Liverpool for American, Apr 4 [SB38p54 SB75]
- 1868 Baptist leader with clarinet with singing 45 years, John Sennitt died, 5 Oct [SB75]
- 1869 death Rev Baber, 94 [CH SN55 SN142]
- 1869 Jonathan Cockerton died, useful man in Methodist society in singing and all the worship except preaching [SB75]
- 1869 vestry consider turnpike road – to continue as injurious for parish to repair so much themselves; take over Broad Baulk road [SN117]
- 1869 Hugh Pigot rectory, offers land on north side church to be consecrated for addition to churchyard [SN117]
- 1870 rate made for new wall round burial ground [SN117]
- 1870 school still in hired premises; was also private school kept by dissenters, catering mainly for children of tradesmen and small farmers [VCH p158];
- 1871 census : population 1145 of whom 205 children; census analysed [SB39 CH]
- 1871 Stretham Engine two original boilers replaced [SB47]
- 1872 school built with grant from Diocesan Board & gift of site by rector Rev Hugh Pigot; designed by J.P. St Aubyn; in first year proved places for 200 children [VCH p158 CH SB35 SN142]
- 1874 toll houses removed [CH]; sales [SN153]
- 1874 charity trustees desirous of altering building formerly Boys school, but now disused, to convert into 2 tenements for residence of two poor widows [SN49]
- 1874-6 church restoration : chancel practically rebuilt and transept, south aisle and clerestory added; removed south porch and provision of new roofs; chancel curtailed and western portion thrown into the nave & window tracery renewed throughout in C14 style. Cost over £4,000 [VCH] [CH]; description of masonry from old church [SN47] description of pre restoration – was school [Stitt p7]; restoration condemned – “were many parts which were of great beauty ...” ERDM 1896 [SB41] memories of church before restoration by Josiah Sennitt, ES 1.12.1922 [SN142] vestry plans enlargement & levelling churchyard 5.5.74 [SN117]
- 1875 Cambridge to Ely turnpike trust expired [SB72]
- 1876 church reopens, new font [CH] – details [SN132 SN142]; sermon [SN117]
- 1876 2 new church bells by J. Warner [VCH p157 Stitt p9]; balance burial ground wall rate for recasting 2 cracked bells [SN117]; subscription opened for new clock
- 1876 sale Brook Lane [SN149]
- 1877 first peal new bells [Stitt p9 SB33p33]
- 1877 rebuilt church- church clock started 7 Feb 1877 - previous clock had only one hand [CH Stitt p9]; description of and opening address [SB33p32]; Sennitt memories 1922 [SN142]
- 1877 feast frumenty [CH]; feast parade started
- 1877 John Jacobs, shop keeper formerly of S to Wm Bradshaw baker – cottage with yard [SB67 d10]
- 1878 Wesleyan new harmonium [CH]
- 1878 Stretham Engine 3rd boiler replaced [SB47]
- 1879 coprolite revival – see 1866
- 1879 to hire 4 acres now used as cricket field at yearly rent £6, instead of recreation ground in Grunty Fen which to be let [SN117]
- 1880 William Blinch property sale [CH]
- 1880 Gravel Farm bought Charles Wright [SN132]
- 1880 sale will Stephen Read [SN142]
- 1880 Stretham Engine : J. Walters succeeds E. Stanley (till 1884) [SB47 SB75]
- 1881 census analysed [SB39]
- 1881 agricultural labourers union meeting, 30 attend [CH]
- 1881 death Miss Baber, who paid off expenses church restoration [CH]
- 1881 Emily Wesley journal recalls village life to 1892; John Wesley father, Plough Monday, Valentines Day, May Day, Feast in street, last load of corn decorated with boughs – horkey, tramps & gypsies;

- Drivers, 'donkey-riding' when beat wife, killing pig. John & Fanny Wesley married 1880, lived Grove House built by old Billy Blinch before 1850 – described; church – Cockshott, processional cross viewed with horror, Lister family, Dr Dimock, Wesleyan chapel too big, Baptists baptised in river; circus elephants watered at pond, dancing bear, concerts, Julia Sennitt" wedding, tea meetings, Flower show [SB66]
- 1882 partnership Briggs Savidge, brewer & son John Henry Savidge [SB67 d24]
- 1882 derailment, Stretham fen [SN150 SN157]
- 1884 Mission Hall – London Evangelistic Mission [VCH p158 CH Stitt p14]; opening Ch 18.1.84 [SN142]
- 1884 Rev H. Pigot dies; had given site for school and seen it to completion, restored church, new clock etc [CH]; "Resignation in bereavement : a sermon". [SB3]
- 1884 Methodists buy land for new chapel [SN58]
- 1884 Stretham Engine : I. Housley succeeds J. Walters (till 1930) [SB47]
- 1884 sale land Read's St [SN149]
- 1885 Canon Cockshott vicar [CH]
- 1885 Methodist chapel new building foundation stone laid [CH Stitt p14] description ceremony [SB66 SN142]
- 1886 Parish room open – for mother's meetings, classes, free reading room [CH]
- 1886 new church organ [CH] description of singing before organ by Charles Driver, 1923 [SN142]
- 1886 memories Sennitt
- 1886 sale cott executors W. Wright, includes Hylton House [SN153 SN149]
- 1886 Methodist chapel new building [CH]
- 1886 ask for pump lower end village [SN117]
- 1886 cemetery formed; churchyard closed & acre Berry Green purchased as cemetery under a burial board, for £400; had considered land Ely Rd occupied by Geo Wright [Stitt p10 SN9 SN117]
- 1887 1st burial in new cemetery - Charles Albert Charles, 11 weeks [Stitt p10]
- 1887 Queen Victoria's jubilee [CH]
- 1887 sale Chear Fen farm, occupied by King Charles [SN149]
- 1888 drain through allotment to be filled in to allow watercourse [SN117]
- 1889 school board set up, church leased building [VCH p158 SB35]
- 1889 coprolite works reopen, many find good wages
- 1889 pumps & wells cleaned out & Town Pond [SN117]
- 1891 dinner to 100 labouring poor [CH]
- 1891 census analysed [SB39]
- 1891 coprolites still worked – "small works a great boon as employ all surplus labour which otherwise out of work during winter" (see 1866) [SB59 SN142]
- 1891 surrender to Henry Lister – message in Cross Lane or Cross St [SB67 d13]
- 1891 railway build cottages near fen signal box & lengthen Stretham station platform [SN142]
- 1892 dinner to 100 old people [CH]
- 1892 5th bell [CH]
- 1893 Alfred Wheeler new schoolmaster (till 1920) [CH SB35]
- 1893 surrender Wm Dimock to Thos Jacobs message, Read's St [SB67 d14] sale [SN143]
- 1893 300 at open-air service, Mission Hall, WS 30.6 [SN67]
- 1894-5 school enlarged & bottom school built [VCH p158 SB35]
- 1894 failure Thomas Fletcher, coal merchant WS 2.3.94 [SN67]
- 1895 names Baptist chapel trustees [SB33p38]
- 1895 Parish council 1st meeting, Feb, W.H. Sennitt clerk [SB41]
- 1895 Mothers Union starts, Oct [SB41]
- 1895 Continuation school opens [SB41]
- 1895 sale Royal Oak, Jul [SN142]
- 1896 School enlargement of class and cloak room [SB41]
- 1896 Stretham Engine scoopwheel increased to present size, old wheel in bad condition & rising breast installed [SB47]
- 1896 Temperance society continue work, pity there an extension of hours of pubs during Feast [SB41]
- 1896 Open air meetings at Ferry cease, Aug [SB41]
- 1896 have brass & string band conducted by Mr Wheeler [SB41]

- 1896 have parish library [SB41]
1896 by 1896 vicar of S had already provided for the Diocese, from his own pocket, three Church Army vans at a cost of £100 and the money for 6 horses needed to pull them from place to place [SN147]
1896 CIP interview ... : "there is a healthy nonconformist & Liberal part of the community but as a whole it is not progressive ... in 1844 we had a tremendous fire which burnt half of the cottages down and I should like to see another to burn some that are left ... lower end is badly supplied with water, only source is rain water and soak wells ... supply of public water in Green End, council decided it neither practical or desirable ... I came across one of the parishioners making his ½ mile journey for a couple of pails of drinking water ... [SN172]
1897 Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee - dinner to people, tea to children
1897 town well – trees detrimental [SN133]
1897 decide to leave Chapel Lane posts in place [SN133]
1897 Briggs Savidge bankruptcy [SN142]
1897 water in river higher than it had been since 1862, February [SB33p18]
1897 church clock face repainted & repaired [SN129 SN142 (1857)]
1897 G.P. Sennitt sent 7 tons poultry from station – EWN 1.1.1897
1897 off licence moves from Red Lion St to Front St, EWG Aug
1897 Friendly Societies Parade, May EWG
1897 sale Hylton House [SN149 SN153]
1898 John Wesley invents new safety guard steam driven chaff cutters [CH SN1]
1898 Charles Wright of Orchard House dies in pew, Baptist chapel – biog [SN50]
1899 repairs are need to ancient stone cross [SB41]
1899 17 London children come on 2 weeks holiday, one bitten by dog [SB41]
1899 ... there are now only old men who understand harvest work, young labourers are swelling the tide that is drifting to London and other large towns and in too many cases to become inmates in our Unions, Sep [SB41]
1899 Dr Barnardo's sent more children to be boarded out with foster families [SB41]
1899 church council formed [SN117]

1900 G.H.S. Willis died without heirs, manorial rights since lapsed [VCH p154 SN164]
1901 Queen Victoria memorial service [SN142]
1901 proposal to name road from Mission Hall to Brooks Lane 'Victoria Rd' defeated [SN133]
1901 Social club started in parish hall
1901 old well near Baptist chapel re-opened, pump erected is 24 ft deep; plentiful supply of water found; proposed to erect a pump near it. People can remember the well being used [SB33 p6 SB41]
1901 35 London holiday children visit, September [SB41]
1901 Parish room used for evening meetings young men [SB41]
1901 farm account book, Stowbridge Farm to 1911 [SB69]
1902 village club accounts – 40 meet in parish room [SB41]
1902 celebrate Coronation [SB41]
1902 church heating renovated [SB41]
1902 hand bier bought [Stitt p10 SB33 p3 SN133]
1902 OS 25" map
1902 use of Berry Green pump : use of well for water cart deprived water in village wells [SN133]
1904 Specimen lamp placed in church, welcome more [SB41]
1905 Edward Lowe, daily carrier to & from Ely 40 years [SB41]
1905 death George Wright, our well-known farmer, 46 [SB41]
1905 nave & chancel painted [SB41]
1905 Empire Day observed for first time, bells, flag [SB41]
1905 Parish Library rules [SB41]
1905 Band of Hope excursions [SB41]
1906 pubs list [SB23]
1906 agree telegraph (telephone) office [SN133]
1906 when electric bells fitted in rectory ancient oak beams discovered under floor present dining room [Stitt p12]

- 1906 Church has been dedicated to St James the Great to distinguish it from St James the Less; observed at special communion [SB41]
1906 Rector, Canon Cockshott, resigns after 57 years ministry; presentation Nov; S.S. Stitt inducted Dec. [SB41]
1906 windmill fantail shattered in storm, WS 16.2.1906 p8 [SN67]
1906 heavy rainfall floods streets, no such record since 1879, WS 6.7.1906. [SN67]
1907 church organ enlarged & improved by H.J. Lister [SB33p6, p36]
1907 choir has 25 young men & boys – up to 70 by June, recruit new bellringers; new carpet in sanctuary & altar frontal; need 10 new lamps; shocking state churchyard; – list of church improvements include work on roof, 2 ancient tombstones former rectors placed in S. transept, Mar; Lister memorial organ; faculty remove part screen make room organ [SB41 SN117]
1907 death of Robert Morden, oldest inhabitant, last of his line [SB41]
1907 telephone office opened; details [SB33p18]
1907 sale, Wood Lane [SN149]
1908 death of Henry Bultift, Bedwell Hall [SB41]
1908 branch of Kings Messengers started
1909 Old age pensioner tea [SN142]
1909 repairs to top of cross which badly cracked; top taken off & sent to Cambridge for repairs by Rattee & Kett, put on again 16 Nov 1909 [SN27 SB33 p3 SB41 Stitt p11]
1909 Charity lease Chequers, now occupation Reuben Jacobs to Messrs Bailey & Tebbutt [SN49]
1909 branch of Territorial Army formed, drill rectory paddock [SB41]
1909 Church Army – Capt Burdell [SB41]
1909 interesting finds in Rectory cupboard including important papers & maps back to 1604 which show 2 churches at Thetford [SB41]

1910 feast banner carried for first time
1910 steeple repairs; steeplejack went to top, brought down and repaired weather cock; wanted parish to spend money on steeple repairs; Isaac Asplin climbed spire and said work not needed [Stitt p9]
1910 death of J. Blinch Dimock [SN142]
1911 Jacobs fire [Ch 28.4.1911 SN142]
1911 parish safe purchased – details [SB33p18 SN133]
1911 street lights sites proposed (go electric 1946) [SN133]
1912 floods – details rainfall [SB33p22 SN142]
1913 funeral Dr Horace Dimock - riots at Wisbech [SN142]
1913 amount of annual value houses [SB33p31]
1913 Charity Commissioners heckled re new scheme, Mar 7 [SN142]
1913 used to have church council but little business so discontinued [SN117]
1914 George Perry Sennitt funeral ES 20.3.1914 [SN3]
1914 housing enquiry – only 2 apply for cottages ES 30.1.1914
1914 Malt & Hops licensing, ES 27.2.1914
1914 R.T. Wesley appointed parish council clerk in succession to Sennitt, Oct. [SN133]

1914-18 WAR

see SN142, SB41

identity cards [SN60]

chronology [SN81]

biographical notes [SN83]

Ely RDM extracts – see SB41

Ely Standard stories – with newspaper indexes, non-war stories listed here

- 1914 military road started [SN81], pontoon bridge 1915, strip land sold Manor 1916 [SN155]
1915c garden fetes started during war [SN69]
1915 Wesley engine pump Norfolk flood water ES 2.4.1915 [SN81]
1915 Boy Scout troop progresses ES 9.7.1915 [SN81]
1915 rectory old wine cellar displaced & ancient windows topped with solid oak revealed [Stitt p12]
1915 Royal Standard licensing ES 19.2.1915
1916 cemetery loan repaid [Stitt p10]

- 1916 outbreak diphtheria due bad sewers [SN133]
- 1916 GP Sennitt funeral
- 1916 furious storm fells trees ES 31.3.1916
- 1916 diphtheria due bad sewers [SN133]
- 1917 dispute over archives with Stitt [SN133]
- 1917 Stitt poem "Tomorrow" [SN153]
- 1917 whole village turned out to watch Wesley's engines arrive home & details firm [SB34p4]
- 1917 new pumping engine for draining commons, can pump 13½ tons per minute ES 5.1.1917
- 1917 Wesley's in dispute over repairs separator ES 16.11.1917
- 1917 Labourer's union meeting ES 21.12.1917
- 1917 remove distemper vestry [SN117]
- 1917 sale Bridge House beer house [SN149]
- 1918 weather vane moved from cross to school [SN133]
- 1918 Wesleys works sold up - traction engines [SB34p9]
- 1918 Stitt writes in Ely RDM – ES 10.5.1918
- 1918 Stitt & labourer's union – ES 13.9, 20.9.1918
- 1918 Innes Stitt missing 19 Apr 1918
- 1918 sale land A.C. Wright [SN149]
- 1919 owing to burst in bank of river Military road under flood for several months large part of commons under water, Old West bank in rotten state ES 7.3.1919 [SB17]
- 1919 county council consider smallholdings, Gravel Farm ES 14.11.1919
- 1919 rat plague – pay 3d every rat [SN133]
- 1919 brass plate war dead [SN117]
- 1919 WI affiliate to National Federation [ES 2.3.1989]

- 1920 war memorial ES 13.2.1920; received 9.2" shell, place in war corner ES 14.5.1920, site ES 15.10.1920
- 1920 Gypsy Smith visits chapel ES 28.5.1920
- 1920 Post Office removed from Swans stores to Baylis ES 4.6.1920 [SN142]
- 1920 Outing Club reorganised after war, first road outing by Parnell's to Hunstanton ES 25.6.1920
- 1920 New Red Lion bought by F. Dale, part of Knights brewery ES 16.4.1920
- 1920 4 new cottages to be erected, cost £800 ES 9.1.1920
- 1920 Wheeler retired, presented chair, ES 3.12.1920 G.C. Bridgeman head (till 1944) [SB35]
- 1920 offered 2 German machine guns as memorial, also French mortar [SN133]
- 1920 water supply opposition [SN133]
- 1920 Geo King Fitch will left £1700+ [ES 10.9.20]
- 1920 P. Routledge appointed as parish council clerk, March [SN133]
- 1921 cemetery war memorial, Nov 13 [SB20 SN51 SN133]
- 1921 1st council houses, Cambridge road "not room to swing a proverbial cat" ES 24.9.1920
- 1921 spiritualism lecture ES 4.2.1921
- 1921 d Hudson, blacksmith ES 4.2.1921
- 1921 d John Dimock, Plantation Farm, no involvement public life, took farm on death his father J.B. Dimock ES 18.2.1921
- 1921 one pair new council houses ready ES 25.2.1921, regret well not sunk & tenants complain about water supply ES 25.3.1921; water fetched from farm 200 yards away, tell contractor install pump for well immediately ES 15.4.1921; 8 habited, 2 more by end month ES 9.9.1921 last ready ES 7.10.1921
- 1921 possession cottage John Catchpole ES 14.10.1921
- 1921 meeting questions agricultural wages, tax on motors, need for bridges ES 28.10.1921
- 1921 d Albert Russell, war hero, America after war ES 28.10.1921
- 1921 Harry Asplin dies in fall from water cart ES 1.7.1921
- 1921 fire stacks, including High St 'after drying several neighbouring walls' ES 15.7.1921
- 1921 war memorial protest, rector apologises ES 12.8.1921; cemetery unveiled ES 18.11.1921
- 1921 sale three cottages Read street extending Brooks Lane ES 1.4.1921
- 1922 Stitt's lecture ES 6.10.1922
- 1922 Opposition to water supply [SN142]
- 1922 churchyard war memorial unveiled, 2nd July.1922 [SB20 SN51 SN142 ES 7.7.1922]

- 1922 death of Mrs Swan, since death husband 10 years ago had been grocer & draper and until recently postmistress ES 21.7.1922
- 1922 Stretham man in asylum, protests, returned ES 1.9.1922
- 1922 death of David Gibbons, bootmaker who trained with father, S. ES 10.2.1922
- 1922 Curtis baby killed ES 24.3, ES 27.10.1922
- 1922 Parnell omnibus unlicensed ES 15.12.1922
- 1922 Stock Club dispute ES 29.12.1922
- 1922 water supply objection scheme, Savidge cannot drink it nor get other people to eat it, don't want to pay ES 16.7.1922
- 1922 death of F.P. Sennitt [SB41]
- 1923 Social club opened Black Hut, till war [SN21]; Minutes – [SB14]
- 1923 Railway siding Stretham fen, new signal box [SN133]
- 1924 Stretham Engine – Mirrlees diesel purchased & since then steam engine little used [SB47]; ran 1925 [SB50]
- 1924 death Harold Reginald Stanley, builder & carpenter, CDN 16.4.1924 [SN142]
- 1925 death John Wesley, engineer, WS 20.3.1925 [SN67]
- 1925 Ferry Bridge weight testing ES 10.7.1925 Ferry bridge weight, July [SN15] pics & names – [SB34p10]
- 1925 water scheme agreed ES 18.9.1925
- 1926 improvement to road near church gate [SB41]
- 1926 Parnell bus sale to Eastern Counties [SN170]
- 1926 Manor bought by Sir Fred Hiam [SN155]
- 1926 sale executors T.G. Parish [SN149]
- 1927 purchase recreation Ground from Hiam £500 [SN133]
- 1927 village agog with Lancashire folk, Sep 16 [SN65]
- 1927 disastrous fire, 6 stacks destroyed at Mr Bagel's Further Fen farm, fen, Oct 14 [SN65]
- 1927 Walter Sadler molecatcher – testimonials [SB10]
- 1927 Cambridge road corner recently altered, 'new by-pass road under construction'; widening of church wall now complete & dangerous corner disposed of. Motorists found it a trying bend to negotiate & more than one came to grief there; rectory and churchyard wall set back ES 12.4.1927 [SN133 SN178]
- 1927 death of Ted Lowe, had been carrier to Ely for 65 years ES 21.1.1927 [SB41]
- 1927 flu epidemic [SB41]
- 1928 "during last 6 months several improvements ...road opposite ancient cross widened a considerable distance and now extended down the street opposite the village pump where old wall pulled down and new one built further back; understand next commence operations on Mr J. Garner's shop thus making the main road a safer thoroughfare for the ever-increasing amount of traffic, W.S. Rayner was contractor" – ES 30.11.1928
- 1928 A. Pope in churchyard when startled by a great crash in tower of church and a clanging of bells; the block of stone used to keep weathervane steady had broken and crashed on to oak beams below [SN65]; architects report [SN68]; unable to use church for two Sundays ... [SB41] [PCC];
- 1928 Stitt's history reprinted [SB15]
- 1928 rectory roof relaid with plain tiles [SN178]
- 1928 new Cambridge road opened - runs in front of recently erected council houses [SN65]
- 1928 bridges over Old West & at Dimmock's Cote opened to traffic [SB17]
- 1928 Feast vans etc to move to recreation ground [SN133]
- 1929 Chapel St fire caused by firework, Oct [SN142 SB41]
- 1929 Nursing Association formed [SN118 SB36]
- 1929 Charity accepts £900 from Green King for Chequers and butcher's shop [SN80]
- 1929 wireless in church [SB41]
- 1930 B. Parish of Front St wins clean milking competition at Agricultural show [SN65]
- 1930 Stretham Engine : E. Stevens succeeds I. Housley (till 1943) [SB47]
- 1930 bells rung again [SB41]
- 1930 Barnardo's child [SB41]
- 1930 death of Charles Murfitt [SB41]
- 1931 water supply scheme [SN133]

- 1931 passenger services end on Grunty Fen line (see reminiscences ES 3.3.1933) [SN65 SN142]
- 1931 Chequers licence to George Nayles [SN133]
- 1931 death J.H. Savidge [SB41]
- 1932 death Bent [SB41]
- 1932 Wesley memorial churchyard & glass windows (unveiled 1934) [ES 9.12.1932 p16 SB41 PCC]
- 1932 Feast parade for Nursing Assoc ES 13.5.1932
- 1933 church heating scheme [SB41 PCC]
- 1933 Crown Inn closed, ES 17.3.1933 [SN132]
- 1933 Sun Inn licence from Henry Partridge to Chas Langford [SN133]
- 1933 new – older council houses Ely Rd ES 17.2.1933 p15 [SN132]
- 1933 no feast parade ES 19.5.1933 p16
- 1933 lorry crash Wesleys garage ES 30.6.1933 [SN142]
- 1933 Methodist chapel new organ ES 3.11.1933 p16
- 1933 Stitt presents plate church [SB41]
- 1934 feast week revived after lapse of 12 months [SN71]
- 1934 Top st pump disused, dismantle [SN133]
- 1934 fire Ely Road farm barns, Orchard Ho ES 3.8.1934 [SN142]
- 1934 death Albert Edward Wesley ES 10.8.1934 [SN142]
- 1934 church financial difficulties, no rich patron; new memorial window Mrs Wesley – postcards from Post Office [SB41]
- 1935 death Rev F.W. Savidge, pioneer missionary, biog notes ES 3.8.1934 ES 27.9.1935, 4.10.1935 [SN70 SN142]
- 1935 King's jubilee ... have lost whole generation of those who would now be able to ease our burdens; people are apt to forget about war and its legacy of broken health, broken minds & broken fortunes ... [SB41]
- 1935 Baptist foundation stone laid
- 1935 electricity cables laid ES 4.1.1935
- 1935 recreation ground play equipment opened July - money left from Coronation celebrations ES 12.7.1935 [SN132 SN133]
- 1935 meeting to form Bowls club [SB9]
- 1935 Town pond to be filled in [SN133]
- 1936 Red Lion licence to Albert Blayney [SN133]
- 1936 death Thomas Palmer Lawrence, miller [SN142]
- 1936 death Thomas Jacobs [SB41]
- 1936 death Fred Granger Hazel [SN129]
- 1936 Stitt has nervous breakdown, Jun, in nursing home & breakdown health 1937; 1938 .. serious private trouble & anxiety & most valued helpers have own domestic strain [SB41]
- 1936-7 bowls club opening [SB73]
- 1937(?) Ely road houses
- 1937 nurse H.Cook appointed, committee squabble, all resign, new formed [SB36 SN118]
- 1937 floods, diesel engine worked from Jan 19 to end of April for total 1,853 hours; at one time for 590 hours without stop [SB50]
- 1937 Crossways garage opened [SN142]
- 1937 Coronation celebrations [SB41]
- 1938 telephone kiosk erected [SN133]
- 1938 death Isaac Asplin [SB41]
- 1938 E.W. Rayner takes Grange Farm [ES 13.5.1976]
- 1939 Stretham steam engine used during floods & again in 1940/41 [SB47], Cambridge road flooding [SN142]
- 1939 petrol lorry crash, Swans ES 17.2.1939 [SN142]
- 1939 choirboys break glass in belfry, hide cassock, dismissed [PCC 13.2.39]
- 1939 Crossways garage failure, ES 24.3.1939 [SN142]
- 1939 pond to be filled in, ES 5.5.1939 [SN142]
- 1939 death Wm Tyrell Rayner, builder, Ely Rd, family in Stretham 300 years, business taken by P. Bysouth [SN142]
- 1939 Akeman House withdrawn at £290, direction late Holland Porter, 14.7.1939 [SN142]

1939-45 WAR

See SB82 : B.C. Stevens' "Stretham wartime memories 1939-1945. 1995

Ely Rural Deanery Magazine notes – see SB41

Ely Standard index 1941, 42, 43,44,45 – with newspaper indexes, scanned for non-war

- 1939 get 146 evacuees ES 8.9.1939; use schools, 22.9.1939 [SN142];
- 1940 Grunty fen allotments ploughed for War Ag [SN133]
- 1940 Mr Dimock to organise metal dump on Ely Rd field, Jun [SN133]
- 1940 purchase stirrup pumps [SN133]
- 1941 RAC box Cambridge road corner demolished accident ES 26.9.1941
- 1941 Mrs Wheeler, wife head, killed in accident ES 10.10.1941
- 1941 Grunty Fen drainage – War Ag press for improvement, history ES 31.10.1941
- 1942 Hiam's farms managers address staff; Stretham farm group 1378 acres under Sid Harley, are still cottages on estates which are a disgrace [SB60]
- 1942 P.W. Routledge leaves, clerk to PC etc, J.H. Acred resigns as councillor and appointed clerk ES 9.10.1942 [SN133]
- 1942 death Mason ES 29.5.1942
- 1943 Wm Goad awarded Albert Medal – ES 29.1.1943 [SN142]
- 1943 d. H.W.Harris, general stores 30 years ES 28.5, 4.6.1943
- 1943 Stretham Engine : C.O. Clarke succeeds Ernest Stevens (till 1974) [SB47]
- 1943 retirement J. Hopkins from Cambridge market [SN64]
- 1944 R.E.Poole head (till 1956) [SB35 SB41]
- 1944 fire Bert Parish's barn in yard - curtains at school smoulder ES 21.4.1944
- 1944 Homecoming funds – squabble between Red Lion & Chequers [SN119]
- 1944 fire cottage Wilburton Rd, saved by NFS ES 19.5.1944
- 1944 church electric lights to be installed, oil totally inadequate ES 10.11.1944
- 1944 2 diesel pumps installed Dimmock's Cote [ES 1.11.79]
- 1944 death Mrs Stitt : much-loved personality, gracious charm ... sympathetic understanding, visits to homes in village, Stitt did service ES 21.4.1944
- 1945 Observation post at windmill opened public
- 1945 death Rev Stitt, brilliant man with great literary ability, was chaplain in SA war ES 3.8.1945 [SB41]
- 1945 Rev J.E. Cowgill appointed ES 9.11.1945 [SB41 PCC]
- 1945 death of Edward Lowe, carrier, not resided for many years ES 23.11.1945
- 1945 shrinkage of soil in Waterbeach Level means two 150 hp engines installed on Cam & diesel engine little used since [SB47]
- 1945 church & parish room lighted with electricity [SB41]
- 1946 Grunty Fen allotments not used and of little value [SN133]
- 1946 PC oppose RDC plans for housing Berry Green, suggest Brook Lane but RDC purchase Wood Lane, object to Minister [SN133]
- 1946 discuss electric street lights [SN133]
- 1946 churchyard in disgraceful condition [SB41]
- 1946 if air-raid shelters demolished Mixed school PC would like first offer [SN133]
- 1947 floods : 2,000 acres in Stretham & Thetford fens flooded, damage severe [VCH p.152]; Charity flood fund to help allotment holders [SN80]; diesel engine ran 354 hours continuously [SB50]
- 1948 produce show broadcast [SN65], detailed CDN 1.6.1949
- 1948 village pump of no further use, to be filed in [SN133]
- 1948 senior children moved to Cromwell School, Chatteris pending erection Sec Mod school for Ely Rural District [VCH p158]
- 1948 war memorial in chancel opening 28 May, cross from chancel screen to be placed over tower arch screen [PCC]
- 1949 brass chandelier purchased at sale at Babraham Hall to be placed in chancel; altar, oak table to be placed in War Memorial corner; painting of Madonna donated by Cowgill [PCC]
- 1949 as churchyard is closed PC to be asked for assistance with maintenance [PCC]
- 1949 Douglas Dawson first settled pastor of Baptist chapel since last century [SN65]
- 1949 RDC sewage scheme (installed) [SN133]
- 1949 Owen Drever offers to donate a bell, others would need rehanging [PCC]

- 1950 new Chear Fen pumping station – details ES 14.4.50
- 1950 war corner refurbished, oil painting presented, book of remembrance ES 8.9.1950 [SN132]
- 1950 Elford farm cottages fire ES 3.2.1950 [SN132 SN142]
- 1950 school cleaning carried out by members one family ES 20.10.1950
- 1950 street renaming : Pond St & Military Rd become Newmarket road; Red Lion St to Chapel St & include Chapel square; Short Lane to Short Rd & Brook Lane to Brook St [SN133]
- 1950 sports popular –ES 14.7.1950
- 1951 bells sent for recasting, back Easter 1952 [SN65]
- 1952 Stretosaurus discovered [SB5]
- 1952 Berry Green named [SN133]
- 1953 Coronation trees on Rec [SN133]
- 1953 Mothers Union launched [SN129]
- 1954 PC suggest preservation old cottages Reads St & Brook Lane, “such old buildings better demolished” [SN133]
- 1954 Berry Close mentioned [SN133]
- 1954 Swift jet plane crashes near houses Stretham fen. Chittering Farm estate – CDN 14.5.1954 p9
- 1954 PCC purchase Parish room for £1 [PCC]
- 1955 Frederick Hiam replaces deck wooden bridge [SB8]
- 1955 ‘Springfield’ 2 Short Rd built [TC 4.2.1995]
- 1955 Over Sixties starts (Silver Jubilee 1980) [ES 7.2.1980]
- 1956 bog oak – pics, televised 8 Feb p9, 18th p10
- 1956 A.A.Blackmore head (till 1961) [SB35]
- 1956 Annual sports programme [SB71]
- 1956 conveyance of Parish Room retained by Diocese as Custodian Trustees for PCC [PCC]
- 1957 Stretham Engine Preservation Trust established
- 1958 Lowe & Crow retire as blacksmith; been blacksmiths over 50 years, served apprenticeships with Hudsons & Son [SN65]
- 1958 Stretham engine filmed BBC Mangolds [SN65]
- 1958 Brian Westrope starts Baptist minister [SN65]
- 1958 youth club flourishing – 35 members [PCC]
- 1959 Football pavilion opened [‘13 years ago’ – ES 18.5.1972]

- 1960 born at Stretham 83 years ago Riley Smith is rural character with his self propelled bicycle, carries on mobile grindery business [SN65]
- 1960 farewell Dr Fairweather, Apr 15 [SN65]
- 1961 Over sixties, Black hut
- 1961 enlarged church hall opened, cost £2562 [PCC]
- 1961 J.A. Willsdon head (till 1968) [CIP 11.7.74]
- 1961 Chequers taken by Hemmings [ES 4.8.1988]
- 1962 Charity value cottage originally schoolroom and range of almshouses not used as outbuildings, cottage of very poor standard and now let to Mr Butteris at weekly rent of 10s. – value whole as development site £250 [SN49]
- 1962 PC reject sale Grunty Fen allotments [SN133]
- 1962 PC refuse pay lights new roundabout [SN133]
- 1962 110 on church electoral roll [PCC]
- 1962 Geoffrey Carter takes over Post Office from Geoffrey Clark who there 30 years [EWN 18.12.1986]
- Clark dies 1974 [ES 30.5.1974]
- 1963 Ely Road pond filled [SN133]
- 1963 cub group formed [EWN 9.10.1986]
- 1963 long delay repairing roads after sewage pipes laid [SN133]
- 1963 Lilian Pikett stops shop (‘5 years ago’ ES 31.10.1968)
- 1964 ask for village policeman in place Mr Lythell [SN133]
- 1964 bypass newly opened [CEN 20.10.1964]
- 1964 CEN Picture Parade feature [CEN 11.12.1964]
- 1965 PC pay to cross repairs [CEN 8.1.1965] [SN133]
- 1966 Rev Dennis Foulds moves to Littleport [CN 5.7.1966]

- 1966 John Hornby inducted, previously rector 5 S. Cambs. parishes for 7 years; married, wife works at school [CEN 3.9.1966 PCC]
- 1966 Akeman Close named [SN133]
- 1966 Charity sell almshouses [SN80]
- 1966 12 vertebrae found at Gravel pit [CEN 8.7.1966]
- 1967 Joseph Garners butcher's shop sale; retired due ill health [ES 24.8.1967] dies [CIP 12.1.1968]
- 1967 Red Lion : Albert Blayney leaves [ES 28.6.1984] Ted Langford succeeds [ES 21.1.1988]
- 1968 Leslie Dyer ferry breeder feature [CN 9.2.1968]
- 1968 new road to Fish & Duck being built [ES 29.2.1968]
- 1968 Charity stop distributing school attendance money [ES 1.2.1968]
- 1968 CEN Picture Parade feature – Pearce, school, Hornby [CIP 7.6.1968]
- 1968 Ely Road bungalows erected [CN 6.1968]
- 1968 win Best Kept village; MJP exhibition in Black Hut ES 18.4.1968, CEN 11.7.1968, presentation CEN 9.8.1968
- 1968 plague of crickets 'from refuse tip, Newmarket Rd' [CIP 18.8.1967]
- 1968 funeral Lilian Pikett, d. Girton; continued business until 5 years ago [ES 31.10.1968 ES 8.11.1968]
- 1968 bus shelters erected Rectory wall with Memorial Hall money by Village Memorial Hall Committee [SN133 CIP 5.7.1968]
- 1968 'without village policeman for more than 3 years' [ES 12.9.1968]
- 1968 Gravel & Dimmock's Cote farm estates sold by S.R. Hopkin bought by Guy Shropshire for record price of £435 an acre [CN 13.9.1968]
- 1968 church Bingo sessions organised aid funds ['3 years ago' – ES 4.11.1971]
- 1968 Orchard House sale £15,500 [CN 31.12.1968]
- 1969 Brian Westrep, Baptist pastor to leaves, started 1958 [ES 9.1.1969, CN 9.1.1968 pic, 15.11.1968]
- 1969 Playgroup to start Methodist schoolroom [CN 11.1.1969]
- 1969 Sennitt roadman feature [CN 28.2.1969] 'recently withdrawn as full-time roadman' [ES 12.9.1968]
- 1969 Fieldside bungalow approved [SN133]
- 1969 T.I.Williams head from January taking over from John Willsdon [SB35] [CN 31.10.1968, 18.11.1968]
- 1969 school lent swimming pool by Manor School for two years [CN 22.5.1969]
- 1969 Constable flooding, Wilburton Rd [SN133]
- 1969 dictatorship of rector, 5 members church council resigned Nov 1968, now 9 not standing; church membership campaign started [7.3.1969 PCC]
- 1969 members Methodist & CoE meet for Holy Communion in Methodist church, 1st time [24.3.1969]
- 1969 A. Routledge workshops, Chapel Lane withdrawn; has planning permission [ES 31.7.1969]
- 1969 Rev Hornby holds Harvest Festival in Chequers [ES 3.10.1969]
- 1969 death Hilda Cook, former District Nurse & midwife; retired 5 years ago [ES 13.11.1969]
- 1969 demolition Almshouses, Chapel St delayed [ES 13.11.1969]
- 1969 bus shelter erected beside Red Lion, Hazel meets costs [ES 22.1.1970]
- 1970 Bruce Sinden inducted pastor Baptist church [CIP 15.1.1970 ES 15.1.1970]
- 1970 fire 15 Berry Close [CIP 5.2.1970]
- 1970 death Mrs Bryda Selina Langford, licensee & landlady nearly 50 years, at White Horse till closure then Sun [CIP 5.2.1970]
- 1970 Feofees cottages modernised [ES 13.4.1970]
- 1970 J.H. Acred retires as Parish clerk, (was appointed 5.1942) [ES 28.5.1970 ES 16.7.1970] Brian Routledge succeeds
- 1971 Meadowcroft name approved [ES 17.6.1971] – (plans opposed 28.5.1970 SN133); advert [CEN 6.4.1971]
- 1971 population may increase by 25% [ES 21.1.1971]
- 1971 Brownie pack formed with Mrs Ingram & Mrs P. Regan in charge [CIP 4.2.1971]
- 1971 Wilburton road flooding – meeting [ES 1.4.1971]
- 1971 churchyard handed to Parish Council [ES 1.4.1971]
- 1971 death Joseph William Stubbins; lost eye WWI, lived Canuck Reads St. 1921 until moved to new bungalow 'Hillcrest' Ely Road, 14 years ago; started as bootmaker but planted own orchard Mill Drove; retired 1955 [ES 8.5.1971]
- 1971 Geoff Beasley retires as milkman [CEN 10.11.1971 ES 11.11.1971]

- 1971 Youth Club feature, Alan Ingle [ES 18.11.1971]
- 1972 Tiled House Farm on market for £74,500 [CEN 28.1.1972]
- 1972 L.A. Jackson (Lewmac) civil engineering contractor in yard beside Baptist chapel disruption; repair & testing of vehicles, loading & unloading material for civil engineering – planners refuse extension; move from village [CEN 11.3.1972 CEN 9.1.1973]
- 1972 petition re crossing Newmarket Road [CIP 14.4.1972]
- 1972 Village plan meeting [6.1972]
- 1972 plans Hazel Ct [SN133] (tenders 20 dwellings, Top St [CEN 9.7.1974])
- 1972 football pavilion extensions opened [ES 18.5.1972]
- 1972 Fish & Duck Marina suite opened [CEN 18.8.1972]
- 1972 Brian Routledge resigns as parish council clerk after 2 years, Brian Dunn appointed [ES 14.9.1972]
- 1972 Horace Taylor retires as bakers roundsman [ES 9.11.1972]
- 1972 church electoral roll now 32 [PCC]
- 1973 Dyers' two cottages & building plot sold [ES 11.1.1973]
- 1973 draft village plan published; facilities included school, Baptist & Methodist churches, Post Office, 2 general stores, butcher, confectioner/café, electrical goods, antiques, turf accountant, 2 petrol filling stations, 2 garages, 2 public houses, coal merchant. The school was on two sites with a total roll of 88 pupils, which was expected to rise to about 100. A new school was being planned with a capacity of 140-180 but was unlikely to be started before 1976. The agricultural basis of employment was becoming eroded and other commercial concerns were not labour intensive (grain merchants, hauliers, plant hire, coal merchant etc). Since the bypass has taken most of the through traffic the High Street has almost become a traffic-free precinct, although the A1123 has in recent years been increasingly used by heavy traffic from the Midlands to the East Coast ports. Improvement of the road around the allotments would be necessary sometime in the future. Population of 1,000 was expected to rise to 1,460 by 1981. Two new main residential areas were earmarked: between Short Road and Green End & part of the land north of Berry Green, owned by the District Council. This would give an additional population of 200 people, anticipating a figure of 1460 residents by 1981. This would put pressure on the school, which could accommodate a maximum of 120 pupils. There would also need to be work on the sewage capacity. [SB111]
- 1973 windmill sale by E.F.S. Hale, Sutton, plan turn into house [CEN 26.4.1973, 17.5.1973]
- 1973 Wright's withdraw lorries from feast, own 13 lorries, had supplied 2 to Feast [CEN 21.3.1973]
- 1973 death J.H. Acred [ES 5.7.1973]
- 1973 Holliday's get off-licence [ES 30.8.1973]
- 1973 John Morley appointed parish clerk, replaces Brian Dunn who leaving [CEN 4.10.1973]
- 1974 death Russell Wright, former Ely butcher [ES 31.1.1974]
- 1974 John Hornby leaves - to move to Devon [CEN 12.12.1973 ES 11.4.1974 18.4.1974];
- 1974 John Askey inducted, curate Good Shepherd for 18 months [ES 4.7.1974 ES 6.6.1974 CEN 3.3.1992]
- 1974 Church Hall to be closed except for bingo; PCC financial problems, no quota paid for 1973 [PCC]
- 1974 'driest spot in country' – Cambridge Water Co [CEN 6.2.1974]
- 1974 Bowls Club extension opened by Hazels [ES 23.5.1974]
- 1974 Jack Edward plans for shop with flat above, High St [CEN 2.5.1974]
- 1975 death Alfred Robert Routledge, master builder, carpenter & undertaker, founded own business after WWII [ES 27.3.1975]
- 1975 June's Café included in Egon Ronay Transport Café Guide, open almost 4 years [ES 13.3.1975]
- 1975 death Leslie Dyer, rabbit farmer [ES 10.4.1975]
- 1975 Paul Hendrich bought windmill 1974 for £7,000 starts to restore as house [ES 3.7.1975]
- 1975 Ely Road pond to be play area – mothers' action group, sec Mrs Julie Impey [CEN 20.8.1975]
- 1975 Dental surgery, The Elms, Short Rd plans [CEN 19.2.1975]
- 1975 CEN aerial photo centred allotments [CEN 1.5.1975]
- 1976 death E.W. Rayner, moved to Grange Farm 1938, where son is now [ES 13.5.1976]
- 1976 school go-ahead for new building [CIP 15.4.1976]
- 1976 Hazel Court opens, April, tenants started moving in Dec 75 [CEN 20.4.1976 CIP 22.4.1976]
- 1976 plans for King Cob estate accepted after various rejections; had started in 1973 when permission granted for 3½ acres; permission lapsed and in 1975 E.A. Sennitt applied for 16 houses – rejected. Jonathan Boyd applied for 20 – rejected. Then Boyd tried for complete site [CEN 22.4.1976, 23.6.1976 ES 23.9.1976 ES 14.10.1976]

- 1976 tug of war across river [ES 21.10.1976]
- 1976 plague of flies around Meadowcroft [ES 15.7.1976 CEN 19.7.1976]
- 1976 White Lion restoration
- 1976 Wooden Bridge timber walls now so rotten intended permanently prohibit use of wooden bridge by motor vehicles [SB8]
- 1977 grant to start Playgroup [CEN 9.12.1977]
- 1977 jubilee garden bought for £50 [SN133]
- 1977 flooding Wilburton road – Constable, CEN 4.1.1977 [SN142] saga continues [ES 20.3.80] more [ES 16.6.83, 28.7.83]
- 1977 all 120 allotments in use – first time in 16 years [CEN 30.4.1977]
- 1977 parish bier stolen but recovered [ES 23.6.1977]
- 1977 Stretham Engine renovated by Eastern Electricity apprentices [CIP 30.6.1977]
- 1977 plans to turn Infant's school into community hall rejected [ES 25.8.1977]
- 1977 death Miss Sarah Kitson [CIP 20.10.1977]
- 1977 Wren Toys cottage industry established in Meadowcroft by Terry & Joan Ridler, home workers [CEN 28.12.1977]
- 1978 school opening [ES 15.6.1978 CIP 15.6.1978]
- 1978 wooden bridge closed 2 years, Cambridgeshire Collection & Hiam's to share cost rebuild [CEN 9.10.1978]
- 1978 June's café 'on verge bankruptcy' ES 22.6.1978]
- 1978 'Fenprobe' launched by Tony May [ES 13.7.1978]
- 1978 Tommy Hale discovers negatives taken many years ago [ES 14.9.1978]
- 1979 church tower campaign launched [CEN 2.8.1979]
- 1979 cafe sale
- 1979 Rectory stable block converted to place of worship [PCC]
- 1979 Routledge & Goad prepare to move from Top Street [ES 18.1.1979]
- 1979 death Albert (Alf) Hemmings, worked for Ellwood before taking Smithy Garage [ES 5.4.1979]
- 1979 King Cob & The Grove names chosen [ES 3.5.1979]
- 1979 electric pump installed Dimmock's Cote; 2 diesel units installed 1944, new opened [CEN 31.10.1979 ES 1.11.1979]
- 1979 Spaceward recording studios plan for former school [ES 25.10.1979 CWN 21.2.1985]
- 1980 Green End (Walton) houses built ('about 6 years ago' – ES 5.4.1986)
- 1980 Over Sixties celebrate Silver Jubilee [ES 7.2.1980]
- 1980 Jubilee Garden complete, opened September [ES 17.3.1980 ES 25.9.1980 - pc]
- 1980 Ely Road council house converted into flats [ES 10.4.1980]
- 1980 British Legion new HQ opens [ES 26.6.1980]
- 1981 'How village has changed' feature EWN [EWN 5.3.1981]
- 1981 death Charlie Watson, aged 76, started at Swans when 17 [ES 5.3.1981]
- 1981 church tower repairs; clock face repainted & gilded; hold services in church hall during winter [PCC]
- 1981 Royal Oak closing – Bill & Joyce Burgess retiring, came to pub 1959 [CEN 30.9.1981 ES 8.10.1981]
- 1982 death Albert Wright [ES 7.1.1982]
- 1982 death Percy Crow [ES 7.1.1982]
- 1982 barn chapel dedicated [ES 13.6.1982]
- 1982 Holliday's popular shop feature [EWN 17.6.1982]
- 1983 gas tanker crash Newmarket Rd – Green End corner [CEN 7.1.1983]
- 1983 death Gerald Stubbins [ES 27.1.1983]
- 1983 Barn ecumenical centre; St Anthony centre in rectory south wing; new church boiler [SN156 PCC]
- 1983 water main burst during AWA manual workers strike; stand pipe Wilburton Rd [CEN 4.2.1983]
- 1983 Bill Morgan bought Royal Oak 18 months ago, plans extension to caravan site [ES 31.3.1983]
- 1983 Derek Constable 14 year struggle floods [ES 28.7.1983], AWA propose opening ditch & large pipes bypass [ES 15.9.1983] new owners no.12 remove 9" pipe, replace with 24" [CEN 21.6.1984]
- 1984 Brian Dunn parish council clerk again [ES 26.4.1984]
- 1984 death Dorothy Garner [ES 3.5.1984]
- 1984 death Albert Blayney, moved Red Lion end 1930s & stayed till 1967; during war large upper room became home to evacuated teachers & course First Aid, subsequently Royal Observer Corps [ES 28.6.1984]

- 1984 John & June tester kept garage 13 years, previously Black & White, plan extend but not reopen [ES 10.5.1984]
- 1984 school : head Trevor Williams, deputy Eileen Jakes (14 years) & Beatrice Stevens (chair Managers) retire; Cliff Knight appointed [ES 19.7.1984]
- 1985 Ann Sinclair Russell appointed parish clerk [PC]
- 1985 Toll House sale for £41,950 [ES 11.4.1985]
- 1985 Methodist chapel centenary [ES 18.7.1985]
- 1985 Tiled House farm sale, modernised [ES 18.7.1985]
- 1985 school desperate for Mobile classroom [ES 16.8.1985]
- 1985 Stretham Festival inaugurated [ES 8.10.1985]
- 1986 new bowls pavilion opened [SB9]
- 1986 death George Dimock [ES 3.4.1986]
- 1986 plans for starter homes corner Read St & Chapel Lane blocked [ES 24.4.1986, ES 21.8.1986]
- 1986 Mrs B.C. Stevens awarded BEM [EWN 19.6.1986, EWN 4.12.1986]
- 1986 Royal Oak put on market, Chris Hutt & Mrs Pat Carpenter buy [CEN 26.6.1986, 26.8.1986]
- 1986 Crofters estate wins electricity energy efficiency award [EWN 14.8.1986]
- 1986 Geoffrey Carter leaves Post Office after 24 years, took over from Geoffrey Clark who there 30 years; formed cub group 1963, later scouts [EWN 9.10.1986]
- 1986 New Town plans announced Xmas [EWN 18.12.1986] appeal Ombudsman [CEN 8.6.1987] H.E. Dudeney Wilburton settlement cmte, Malcolm Moss attacks [CEN 26.11.1987]
- 1987 Green End plans (Reu Clark's plot) [ES 5.3.1987]
- 1987 plans for youth centre at Rectory [EWN 19.3.1987]
- 1987 Lazy Otter opens – Paul Barton & Karen Speirs [CEN 3.4.1987]
- 1987 Misses Acred Doctor's surgery closes on retirement Dr Richard Wolfendale, used for 73 years, [CWN 9.7.1987]
- 1987 Methodist chapel closed [PCC]
- 1988 Ted Langford retires red Lion after 21 years; his grandfather kept Sun; mother and father kept Sun & White Lion where Ted born [ES 21.1.1988]
- 1988 Consortium plans smaller settlement [CEN 20.9.1988] Westmere plans unveiled [ES 22.12.1988 SB21]
- 1988 Stretham Engine Trust formed and new 99 year lease obtained from Waterbeach Level IDB [SB48]
- 1988 AJs restaurant opens [ES 11.4.1988]
- 1988 Dulcie Hemmings retires Chequers after 27 years; took pub with husband 1961, he died 1979 [ES 4.8.1988]
- 1988 death Ethel Feetham, 30 years counter clerk Post Office, clerk Charity Trustees [ES 1.9.1988]
- 1988 1st week-long festival [EWN 13.10.1988]
- 1988 John Askey leaves rectory; rectory & part of church exorcised [PCC ES 4.2.93]
- 1988 Diocese propose to sell rectory, develop grounds for youth centre with reservation for new parsonage [PCC]
- 1989 revised Structure Plan has not blocked new town [ES 23.5.1989];
- 1989 Rectory reported to be on market, a benefactor to underwrite the cost of new rectory and youth centre [PCC]
- 1989 death Harry Lowe [ES 12.1.1989]
- 1989 WI affiliated national federation 70 years [ES 2.3.1989]
- 1989 Hiam's estate sold, trust wound up, sold by grandsons Peter & John Wilson [CEN 11.5.1989]
- 1989 Cambridge Grass Track Racing club going 5 years, A10 [CEN 15.5.1989]
- 1989 last church fete at Rectory [ES 29.6.1989]
- 1989 'Feast of Memories' published by B.C. Stevens [CEN 25.5.1989]
- 1990 Mace Store closes after 123 years; formerly Swans was bought 1950s by Charlie Watson, have problems since 3rd grocery shop established 5 years ago [ES 11.1.1990]
- 1990 Mrs B.C. Stevens retirement as village correspondent after more than 50 years [ES 22.3.1990]
- 1990 Chequers for sale [CEN 3.5.1990]
- 1990 'Dakota Road' film crew in village [ES 14.6.1990]
- 1990 'Stretham Gazette' 1st issue [ES 14.6.1990]
- 1991 death Ernest Edgley, former parish council chairman, district councillor, 92 [ES 8.8.1991]
- 1991 The orchard, Stretham Rectory excavation [SB56]

- 1991 new rectory plans – to be turned into youth centre & 3 dwellings built in grounds [PCC]
- 1992 Westmere : inspector rejects – devastating affect landscape, unwanted pressure on facilities; pantomime to celebrate [EWN 16.1.1992]
- 1992 rectory benefactor withdraws; oppose plans for houses beside church hall [PCC]
- 1992 gale blows half church clock face off, damaging roof [PCC]
- 1992 Windmill Day Nursery opened [ES 7.5.1992 CEN 22.1.1992]
- 1992 CEN village feature [CEN 3.3.1992]
- 1992 Red Lion bought by David Jenkins [D.Exp 8.6.1992]
- 1992 Wright house fire [EWN 17.12.1992]
- 1992 Church spire appeal for £32,000 [EWN 17.12.1992]
- 1993 death of Bill Lythell, former village policeman [ES 28.1.1993]
- 1993 Stretham Engine 1st phase repairs [SB48]
- 1993 Rector John Askey leaves July [PCC ES 17.6.1993]
- 1993 Cliff Knight headmaster leaves, Edris Tildersley appointed [CEN 26.7.1993]
- 1993 Westmere plan resurfaces [ES 0.9.1993]
- 1993 church spire restoration starts, completed Oct 1994 [PCC ES 7.10.1993]
- 1993 Quarterway House demolished by lorry [DT 30.10.1993]
- 1993 East Cambs. district plan: village services have declined; parts of village especially around High Street are showing signs of neglect. A10 dualling proposed, but would be environmentally unacceptable and need to be aligned west of village. A1123 should be reclassified as a B road with weigh restrictions or calming measures. Designated a group settlement up to 15 houses [SB112]
- 1993 East Cambs. district council allocate money for all-weather sports facilities, group set up to consider application; discussion continue through 1994 & into 1995 with the Parish Council threatened with legal action by residents of Short Road opposed to the plan [PCAPM]
- 1994 Rev Frederick Kilner licensed as Priest-in-Charge, 31 Oct; Malcolm Raby licensed Team Vicar, Dec 23 people had taken services during interregnum, July 1993 to Oct 1994 [PCC]
- 1994 Rectory to be residential youth centre plan – plan scrapped [EWN 9.2.1994 ES 17.3.1994]
- 1994 school resources centre opened [EWN 7.11.1994]
- 1994 Mill View house for sale – price £155,000 [CEN 23.6.1994]
- 1994 new bridges at Green End & Newmarket Road; Dimmock's Cote bridge strengthened
- 1995 Crossways Garage sale [CEN 13.10.1995]
- 1995 new play equipment installed on Recreation ground [PCAPM]
- 1995 Hereward Housing Association take over council housing from East Cambs DC
- 1995 East Cambs D.C. take responsibility for churchyard maintenance
- 1996 School OFSTED report [SB57 ES 23.1.1997]
- 1996 Pastoral scheme for dissolution of parish of Stretham with Thetford & creation of new benefice of Ely parishes of St Mary, Chettisham St Peter & Prickwillow & parishes of Stretham, Lt Thetford & Stuntney with team ministry; Rectory to be disposed of [PCC]
- 1996 Rectory to be home for Autistic Adults [SB113 PCC]
- 1996 Church Loop system installed [PCC]
- 1996 new all-weather sports surface and pavilion opened on Recreation Ground
- 1996 village enhancement scheme drawn up involving repaving around the cross, changes to entrance to Pump Lane & at Sun Corner, new lights, removal of overhead cables [PCAPM]
- 1997 East Cambs. local plan reports that between 1991 & 1996 there were 70 housing completions with a further 27 unimplemented consents. It was designated a group settlement to allow small housing groups & infill only
- 1997 church clock overhauled [PCC]
- 1997 celebration for 775 years of the church in Stretham [PCC]
- 1998 Rev Malcolm Raby appointed priest-in-charge, Over [PCC]
- 1998 new path constructed in churchyard [PCC]
- 1998 Rectory converted into Juniper House, home for Autistic Adults
- 1998 Church floodlighting [PC]
- 1998 Holt Fen new footbridge opened, August
- 1998 former Swans shop plans for conversion into houses [PC]
- 1999 Rev John Sansom licensed as team Vicar responsible Stretham & Thetford [PCC]

